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TURRICAN

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT GAME DEFINES THE AMIGA FOR YOU?

DARRAN JONES

It's probably *Eye Of The Beholder II* for me, because it convinced me I should sell my NTSC SNES collection.
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!
Currently playing: Marvel's *Spider-Man: Miles Morales*
Favourite game of all time: *Strider*

TIM EMPEY

I reckon it's *Super Cars II*. I played that so much, probably more than any other Amiga game at the time. And *Xenon 2: Megablast* of course.
Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go
Currently playing: *Return To Monkey Island*
Favourite game of all time: *God Hand*

NICK THORPE

Although I played it most via the excellent Master System conversion and absolutely adored it, *Lemmings* really felt like it needed a mouse and that always tied it to the Amiga in my mind.
Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III
Currently playing: *Donut Dodo*
Favourite game of all time: *Sonic The Hedgehog*

ANDY SALTER

Elfmania, it's the only game I can remember seeing exclusively on the Amiga.
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently modding: *STALKER: Anomaly GAMMA*
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War* although I guess it's the *Remastered* edition now.

PAUL DRURY

Cannon Fodder. It was clever and very poignant, plus it was the first title I'd played that really showed what a mouse controller could bring to a game.
Expertise: Peter Grant's private arcade
Currently playing: *Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*

ANDREW FISHER

Pinball Fantasies, because of its four excellent tables and great physics.
Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch
Currently playing: *Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga*
Favourite game of all time: *Wizball*

DAVID CROOKES

Without a doubt, *Sensible World Of Soccer* – a perfect match for the Amiga and a game that still makes me sick as a parrot when I lose (which is often!)
Expertise: Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, *Dizzy* and PlayStation 2 (but is it actually retro? Debate!)
Currently playing: *The Secret Of Monkey Island*
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*

RORY MILNE

In terms of wow factor and pure playability *Uridium 2* defines the system for me. It's like Andrew Braybrook convinced the Amiga that it was the latest hot coin-op.
Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing
Currently playing: *Stunt Car Racer*
Favourite game of all time: *Tempest*

MARTYN CARROLL

Eric Chahi's *Another World*. Having just upgraded from a Spectrum, it was the first game to really open my eyes to 16-bit gaming. And that opening sequence!
Expertise: Sinclair stuff
Currently playing: *Resident Evil 6*
Favourite game of all time: *Jet Set Willy*

LOADING...

I can still remember the first time I played on an Amiga. I was visiting a friend's house as he'd just upgraded from an Amstrad to Commodore's machine, and he was tremendously excited about showing me his new purchase. He was a proud owner of the 'Batman Pack' and Ocean's game was the first he demoed to me. I'd already seen games like *Blood Money* and *Defender Of The Crown*, but they'd been through glass, watching demos of them as I waited for the bus outside Parkstone's sole computer shop. Hearing the numerous movie samples and playing the spectacular Batmobile level was a completely different experience to peering through a shop window and I ended up playing countless games before I finally left.

Such was the Amiga's impact on gaming that we've put together two features for you this month. One focusses on some of the system's best games, the other looks at the history of *Shadow Of The Beast*, arguably one of the Amiga's most impactful titles. Other highlights of this issue include a collector's guide to Atari's Lynx, Ultimate Guides on *Turrican* and *Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja*, an exhaustive look at Imagine Software's many games and an in-depth article on Level 9's HUGE adventures. Oh, and we've got a fantastic subscription offer for you on page 26.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

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Paul gets nostalgic for the many interesting sounds of gaming

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Discover one man's journey to document every game featuring Moai

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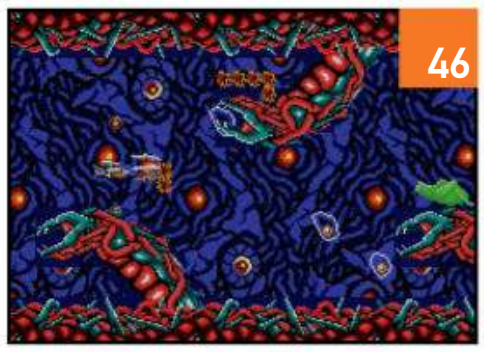
It's May 2006 and Nick is once again travelling through time



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Namco certainly liked making weird peripherals for the PlayStation. Nick gets his hands on the Jogcon

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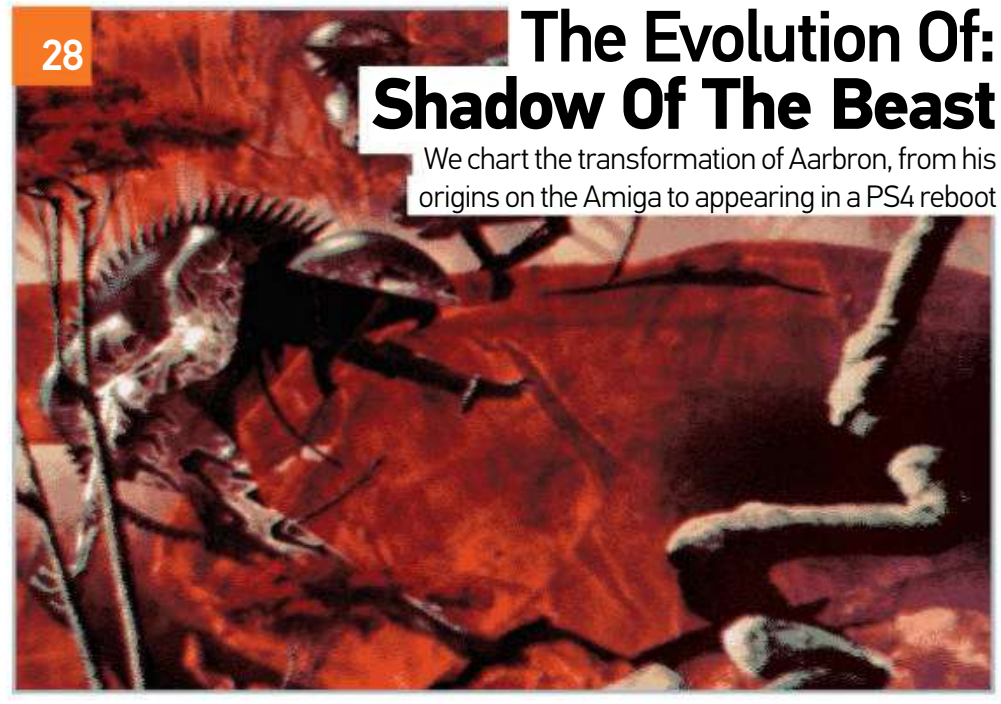
Darran's been considering collecting Lynx games for the fourth time. Will the prices put him off though?

Games That Defined The Amiga

Commodore's 16-bit computer left a huge impact on gamers. Here, we look at key games and ask developers to reveal their own favourites



The Evolution Of: Shadow Of The Beast

We chart the transformation of Aarbron, from his origins on the Amiga to appearing in a PS4 reboot

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Martyn Carroll revisits the Data East coin-op and finds out about the HD remake

Level 9's HUGE Adventures

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Keep your letters coming, we do love reading them

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Discover what we've got planned for 28 days time

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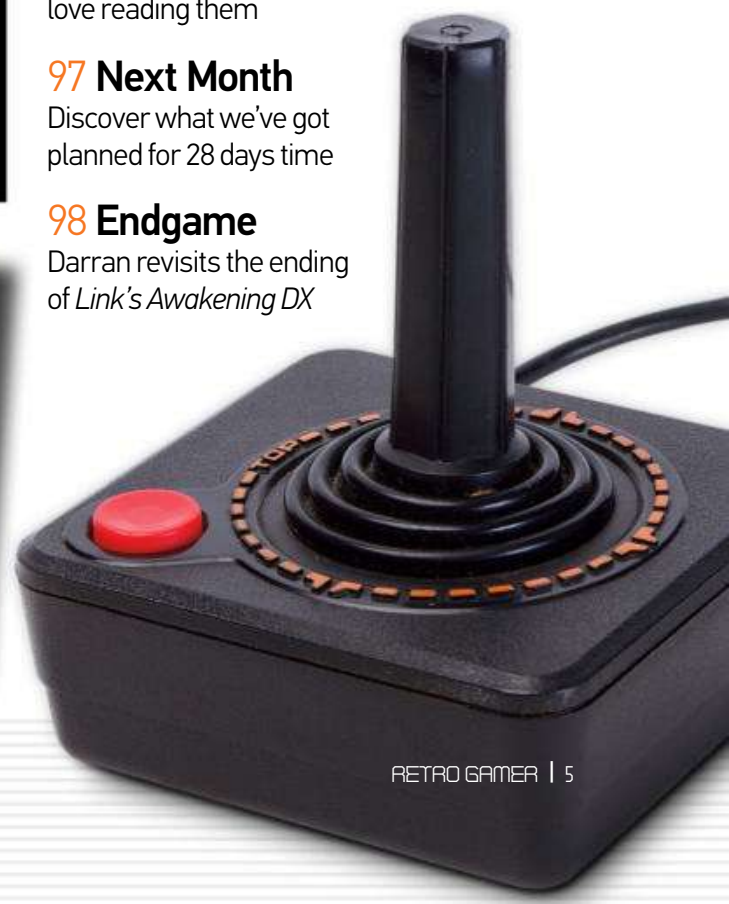
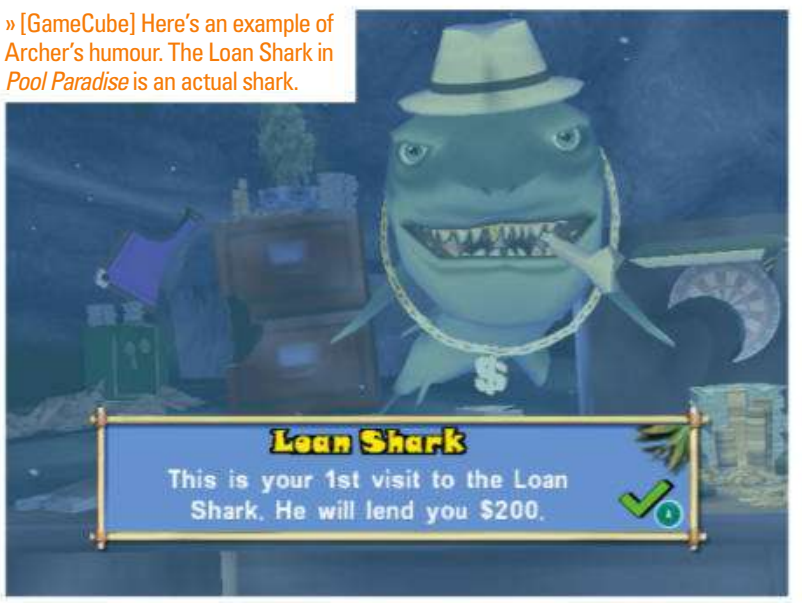
Ultimate Guide: Turrican

Rory Milne works his way through Manfred Trenz's exceptional run-and-gun classic



» [Atari 8-bit] *Dropzone* came from Archer's love of fast-paced arcade games like *Defender* and *Stargate*.

» Mark Cale shared this image of him and Archer on the sad news of Archer's passing. Photo credit: Mark Cale.



» [GameCube] Here's an example of Archer's humour. The Loan Shark in *Pool Paradise* is an actual shark.

ARCHER MACLEAN – CELEBRATING A GAMING LEGEND

Friends and developers pay tribute to the creator of Dropzone

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We pay our respect to the master coder of such hits as *Dropzone* and *IK+*

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Find out what happens when Iain decides to revisit some classic TV game shows in computer form

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Paul's focussing on sounds in videogames, but not the sounds you might think...

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Do you like Moai? Matt Sephton does and he's created an entire website dedicated to them

14 BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES
Nick charges up the flux capacitor and prepares to visit a brand-new month. What will he find there?

We start the first issue of 2023 with the extremely sad news that Archer Maclean has passed away at the age of 60. Famed for hit games like *Dropzone*, *IK+* and *Jimmy White's 'Whirlwind' Snooker*, Archer was an incredibly accomplished programmer and a prolific name throughout the Eighties and Nineties.

Known for his love of arcade games (he owned a large number of classics and eventually started to restore them) he made his mark with the excellent *Dropzone*, which took elements of Eugene Jarvis' *Defender* and pushed the capabilities of both the Atari 8-bit and Commodore 64. Archer's calling card meant he soon caught the attention of System 3's Mark Cale, who paid his own tribute to Archer on Facebook and shared a photo of them having dinner together while discussing a new project Archer was involved with, *IK++*. "Another industry friend and a key person in the history of System 3 was Archer Maclean. Very sad to say that he passed away last night," Mark shared. "We had been working on *IK++* together on and off for several years. Rest in peace, Archer. *IK++* is for you."

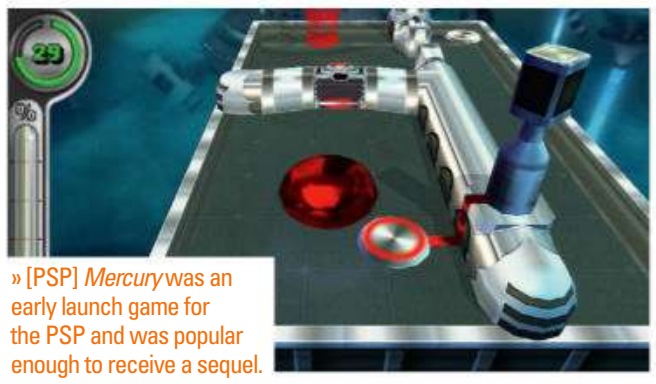
» Archer Maclean was a legend in the UK gaming community and will be sadly missed. Photo credit: Maclean family

News of Archer's passing spread quickly on Christmas Day, with a swell of support from both developers and those that had enjoyed playing his games growing up. One such person was the musician Allister Brimble. "I was very sad to hear of the passing of Archer Maclean. He was a pioneering coder who came up with many famous titles including his snooker games of which I worked on several," Allister posted. "He visited my family house so that we could get the sound design to his exacting standards. I'm not sure what I made of him at the time, being the complete opposite of me. He arrived in a black Porsche 911 in a leather jacket, was very confident and very proud of his achievements, but I respected him. (And I got a Porsche soon after too, probably inspired by Archer!) We soon got down to work though and it was obvious immediately why he had had so much success. It was his pure coding ability which outclassed almost anything at the time. RIP Archer, your achievements will be remembered forever."

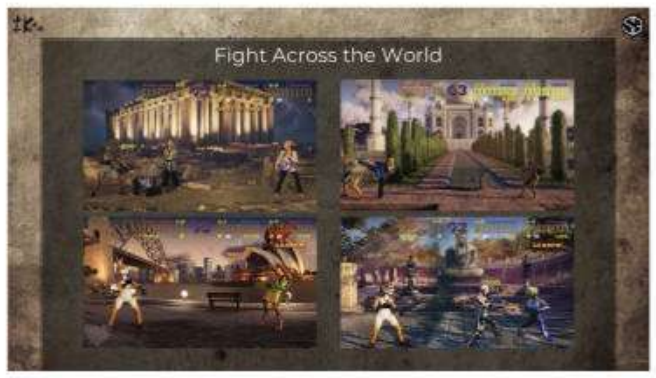
And what achievements they were. *Dropzone* was a stunning homage to the many fast-paced games that Archer had enjoyed playing so much in arcades, while *International Karate* and *IK+* were both considered pinnacles of the genre when they first debuted on home computers in the late-Eighties. Archer's various pool and snooker games were acclaimed for their authenticity and attention to detail, while later releases like

» [Amiga] Weird things will start happening in *Archer Maclean's Pool* if you don't take shots in time.

» [C64] Archer was well-known for putting humour in his games, with the trouser dropping of *IK+* being particularly memorable.



» [PSP] *Mercury* was an early launch game for the PSP and was popular enough to receive a sequel.



» Mark Cale told us Archer had been involved with *IK++*. Here are some early screenshots of the planned sequel.

Archer Maclean's Mercury (which this writer was lucky enough to play during its development whilst working on *games™*) proved he had lost none of his magic in the later years of his career.

"My sincerest condolences to the friends and family of Archer Maclean, legendary UK programmer of *Dropzone* and *IK+,"* tweeted Digital Eclipse's Mike Mika. "An arcade aficionado and just an incredible gentleman. He was only 60 years old and eternally young at heart. RIP." Mev Dinc was another coder and friend of Archer who shared his support for the esteemed coder online. "Absolutely devastated by the sad loss of our friend Archer Maclean!" he posted. "Such an amazing talent with a string of great titles to his credit. RIP Archer." Artist Kevin Bayliss also shared his support for Archer, saying, "That's very sad news, what an amazing dev – ahead of his time, responsible for many happy hours of my life as a teenager. Thank you for the games."

> "His pure coding ability outclassed almost anything at the time"
> **ALLISTER BRIMBLE**

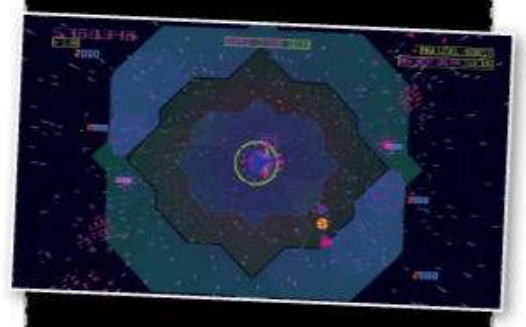
When **Retro Gamer** first relaunched back in 2005 we were lucky enough to have Archer as a regular columnist. His columns would usually discuss his love of arcade games (his first article was about Atari's *Pong*) but also divulged his other passions which included robotics, collecting digital watches and calculators and numerous other subjects. His sheer passion for the subject matter always came through, particularly his love of videogames.

Fusion Retro Books' Chris Wilkins is another person lucky enough to call Archer a friend and recalled the many good times he shared with Archer during a lengthy post on Facebook (bit.ly/archertribute) "I first met Archer Maclean way back in 2005 – he was at the CGEUK Event in Croydon with a number of his arcade cabinets for visitors to play on," Chris posted. "I did my first event in December that year and asked Archer to come along – he did and was one of the guests at The Retro Ball event I organised with a number of other industry names – Rob Hubbard, the Oliver twins and Jon Hare. At the 2018 Revival event I introduced him to John Romero. We went for a meal in Kenilworth all together in the evening, and John and Arch literally spoke in 6502 machine code all evening." Chris' post goes on to mention other fond memories he shared with Archer and that he discovered Archer was suffering from bowel cancer and that Archer eventually lost that battle after numerous surgeries and chemo sessions on the 17 December 2022. Our thoughts go out to all of Archer's friends and family.

» [Wii] *Wheelspin* was Archer's last published game and was released in 2008. It's also known as *SpeedZone*.

AKKA ARRH UNEARTHED

If you've been playing *Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration* you'll be aware of *Akka Arrh*, a lost arcade game that's been restored by Digital Eclipse. It would appear that Atari wants more gamers to experience the lost classic as it has now given Jeff Minter free rein to create his own take on the mythical game. What we've played of it so far suggests it's full of Jeff's typical attention to detail and that makes us very happy indeed.



EVERCADE EXP THEFT

Just as the Evercade EXP was due to launch, Blaze revealed that a large shipment of its Limited-Edition EXPs totalling half-a-million pounds had been stolen in a suspected targeted attack. CEO Andrew Byatt revealed in a statement that Blaze is planning to remanufacture the stolen goods and will be given those affected suitable compensation. "We firmly believe that the customers of Blaze and Funstock are victims here and we apologise for the impact this event will cause." More updates soon.

Who is Iain Lee?
Iain Lee is a freelance broadcaster who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. Join him as he hosts a phone-in show and plays games at www.twitch.tv/iainlee and also check out www.patreon.com/iainandkatherine

What do points win?

After a quiet couple of years during COVID, I am now working harder than ever before. I have three jobs: hosting a breakfast show on Jack FM, working as a counsellor and doing shows and podcasts via Patreon. The latter is done behind a paywall for people who are prepared to stump up a few quid every month. Since you asked, it's at patreon.com/iainandkatherine

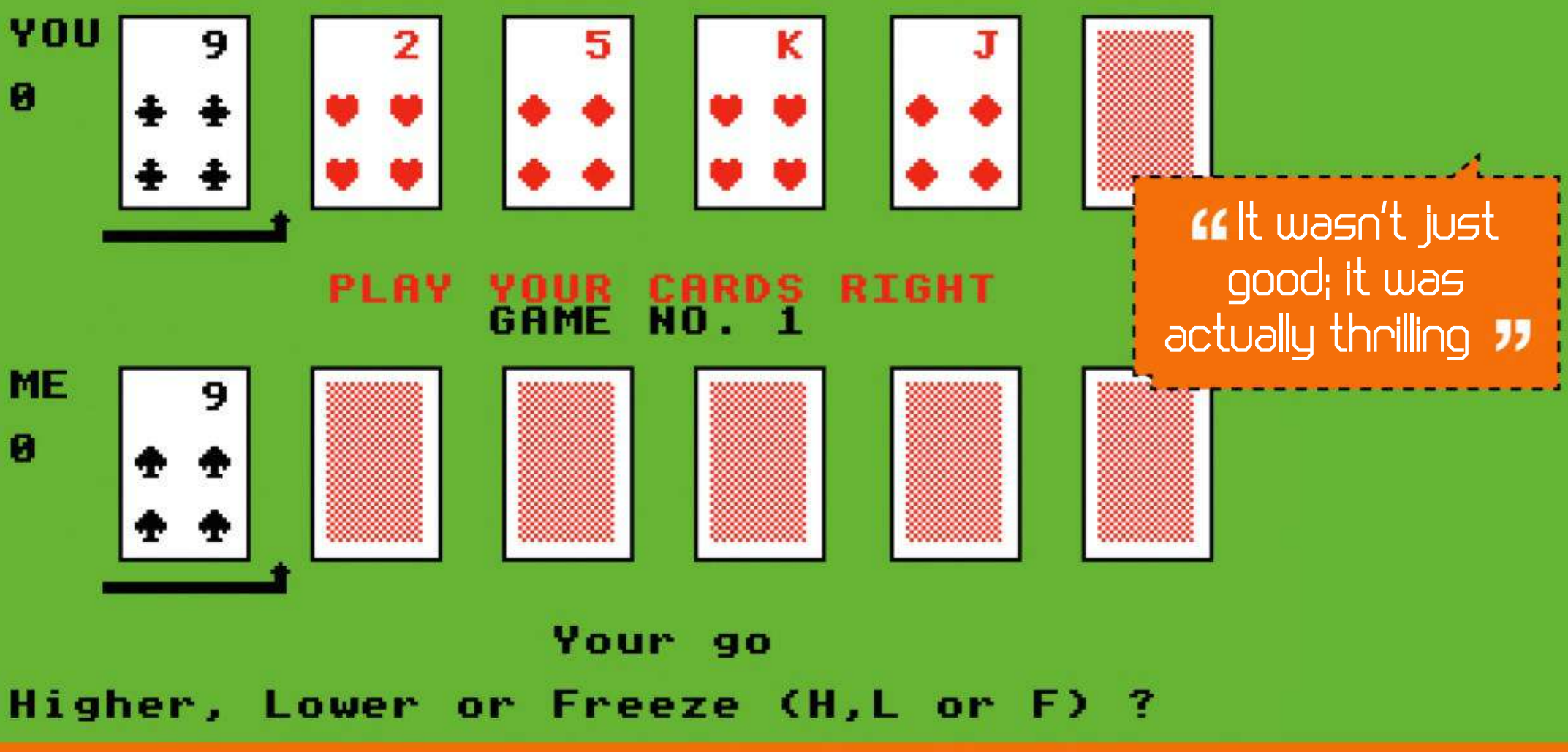
What makes the Patreon show so cool is I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT. Literally. I can talk silly or serious, I get to interview some really fun people and I can watch classic TV programs. Recently I have been watching a lot of old game shows: *3,2,1*, *The Price Is Right* and *Play Your Cards Right*. Watching Brucey bring on the Dolly Dealers (my God, a lot of these shows are very problematic) rang a very faint and distant bell in the back of my mind. Wasn't there a BBC Micro version of *Play Your Cards Right*?

I fired up the Beeb and lo and behold, yes there was. My next online show was going to be a Forsyth special. Friday night came and we were all set. My co-presenter Katherine and I set everything up so we could stream the game. About 150 people joined us and we were off. I was expecting it to be a load of rubbish that we'd play for five minutes before going, "Weren't the olden days a load of cack?" But no. Something magical happened. THE GAME WAS GOOD. It wasn't just good; it was actually thrilling. The questions were bonkers, "We asked 100 men, do you think your partner likes cheese?" was the kind of stuff we were asked. One of us would type in a number and the other would guess higher or lower. Whoever was right got to play the card game. I am assuming that if you're reading this, you're of a certain age and really don't need the mechanics of this classic TV show explained. If you're under 35, may I politely suggest you Google it.

Suffice to say, it was every bit as exciting as the TV show. That sounds sarcastic, but I am being genuine. I lived in the South East and whenever ITV switched over to London Weekend Television on a Friday evening the atmosphere in the house changed. There was something rough, ready and loud about these programmes and even from the age of eight the vague gambling concept of this rather simple show had me on the edge of my seat.

We ended up playing about two hours of this with the rivalry getting stronger every time one of us said, "Just one more?" When we did get bored, we moved onto *Blockbusters Gold Run* (just the Gold Run, not the full game) and spent another 45 minutes playing that.

So, here's my thinking on computer games from the early Eighties. A lot of them don't stand the test of time. And had I been playing these on my own I wouldn't have gotten past five minutes. However, playing them with a partner AND having an audience taking part really does elevate them to the next level. I think I might move over to Twitch and become the only streamer to play BBC Micro games on there. *



"It wasn't just good; it was actually thrilling"

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Who is Paul Rose?
Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

The sounds of gaming

What sounds do you associate with gaming? I'm not talking about in-game sounds – the music, the effects – but the sounds that come from the physical act of playing games.

Gaming has always been a multi-sensory experience, even without having Smell-o-Vision, or joypad vibrations and other gimmicks. We are physical beings and interacting with games is something that engages all of our senses. There's a reason why YouTube gets good numbers for ASMR videos where people are simply handling controllers. The ambient clicks and rattles of a DualShock in somebody's hands is simultaneously soothing and nostalgic. Also: most of the thumbnails prominently feature cleavage, but we'll gloss over that.

Somehow, my original PlayStation – the PSX or PlayStation 1, depending on how you want to label the machine – had a tendency to get kicked in passing, or knocked by the vacuum cleaner, or I wouldn't put the disc in properly in the first place. Basically, 50% of the time the disc would be out of alignment, and it'd make a worrying buzzing sound as it tried to spin (inevitably scratching the disc to hell in the process). Awful and worrying, but it's a sound I associate now with a certain era of gaming history.

There has probably never been a more horrific sound than that of a ZX Spectrum game loading – the one that'd be accompanied by the photosensitive epilepsy-baiting flickering coloured bars. It sounded like a thousand cats being chased down a subway tunnel by a shrieking robot, but there would be a point in the loading process that it transformed to aural nectar. Usually, it'd be when the loading screen started to drop in line by line, and the screeching cacophony would be replaced by this sort of ticking, clicking, shuffling sound. Lovely.

Much as I adored my Super Nintendo, I did not appreciate the cartridge slot. I ruined one too many games simply by plugging them into the machine. That part of the design almost felt like a bit of an afterthought. However, there was nothing more satisfying than the heavy 'thunk' that came from ejecting a SNES game. Sometimes I'd even experiment with how hard or softly I'd press the eject button, yet no matter how gently I'd press it'd always spit out the cart with an audible 'ka-donk'.

My Xbox 360 might be my favourite console of all time – yeah, I know, but I have my reasons. Yet, like many of you, it did succumb to the red ring of death. My 360 also had a tendency to get very hot, and when it did the fan would begin whirring and huffing like a dying grampus. That would typically be a sign to turn it off and let it cool down for a bit. Which I never did.

Probably my favourite gaming sound ever is simply the noise of an arcade. Dozens of different machines playing their attract screens simultaneously… penny falls chirruping and clinking… change machines paying out… a racing game off in the corner… somebody winning a gonk.

And always, somehow, no matter what year… you can hear the none-more-distinctive sounds of *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders* cutting through it all.

> "My Xbox 360 might be my favourite console of all time - yeah, I know, but I have my reasons"

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

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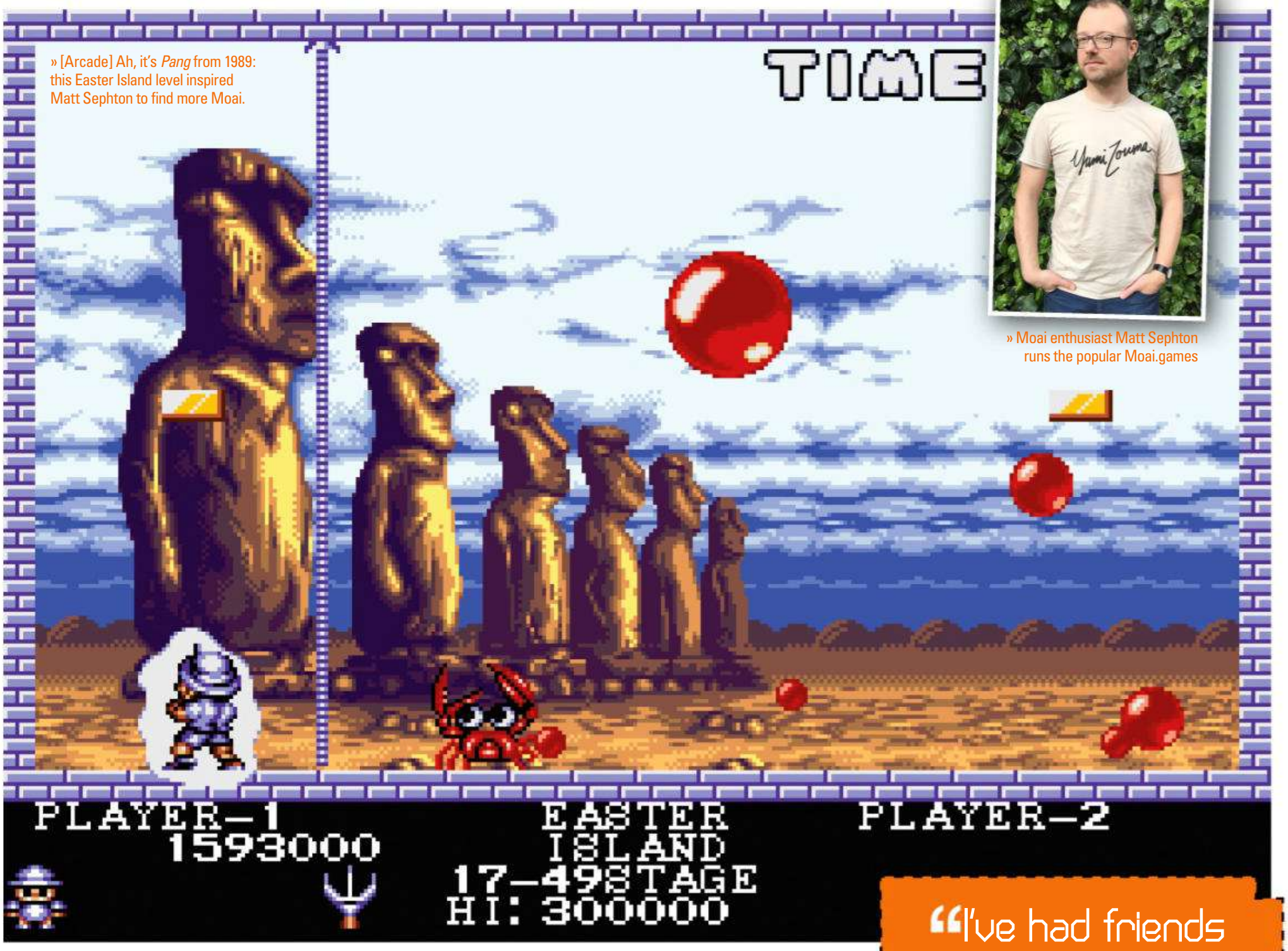


» [Arcade] Ah, it's *Pang* from 1989: this Easter Island level inspired Matt Sephton to find more Moai.

» Moai enthusiast Matt Sephton runs the popular Moai.games

Moai.games

Indie developer Matt Sephton has a passion for spotting monolithic human figures in videogames

Matt Sephton has a passion for videogames – indeed, he's recently developed a handful for the Playdate handheld console. He also loves the massive megalith Moai statues at Easter Island and he adores lists. So forgive him for indulging all three interests with a website that lists the 671 videogames (and counting) that include Moai in some way. We spoke to him to find out more.

What do you like about Moai?
I've always been fascinated with the world's ancient wonders such as the Pyramids Of Giza, the Hanging Gardens Of Babylon and of course Moai. Around 2010, I'd just moved house and saw a relatively small Moai for sale in a garden centre. I thought it would look cool on display at home!

When did you first start noticing Moai appearing in videogames?
For as long as I've been playing games, back to my formative years on Atari ST and SNES. I distinctly remember spotting Moai in the final stage of *Pang*, one of my all-time favourite games. I used to have the backgrounds from that game appear as postcards on my computer screensaver.

> "I've had friends put Moai in their games just to make it onto the list"
> **MATT SEPHTON**

Why did you create Moai.games?
I've been contributing to the Video Game Soda Machine Project (vgsmproject.com) since 2016 and I'd spoken to prof Jess Morrissette about doing something similar with my list of Moai in videogames. It took me almost a year to get around to it but procrastination on a rainy weekend tipped the balance and made me buy a domain name and put the site live.

How many games from the site have you discovered?
I'd guess that I've found around 25%, playing the games and taking the grabs since no images existed elsewhere. That means 75% of submissions have come from the community!

Have you approached any publishers or developers for help with your project?
I've approached single developers to confirm something that looks like a Moai was intended to be one. Developers have also reached out with games they've made featuring Moai, from past jobs for big

» [Arcade] Taito's 1989 coin-op *Megablast* made no attempt to hide its use of Moai!

» [PC] Lara Croft has met the odd Moai. This one is from *Tomb Raider III*.

» [PlayStation] One of Konami's 112 Moai-including games is *World Soccer Winning Eleven* from 1996. What a result!

» [Arcade] Sega's classic *Space Harrier* from 1985 uses large floating Moai as enemies.

» [GBA] Konami has included Moai in more games than any other developer including here, in *Konami Krazy Racers* from 2001.

» [PlayStation] It's quite fitting that this Moai lays flat in the side-scrolling shooter *Gradius Gaiden* from 1997.

publishers to current indie projects. I've also had friends put Moai in their games just to make it onto the list! If I'm honest, I've been guilty of that myself – Moai feature in most games I've been making for the Playdate handheld console.

What genre tends to feature the most uses of Moai?
The most common genres featuring Moai are shmup, adventure, platform and racing, although it seems that pretty much every genre has featured Moai in some way or another.

Why do you think Moai are used so often in videogames?
These days you might call it a meme that everybody is in on. Personally, I think they're an easy way to add mystery and meaning. Why does Mario turn into a Moai wearing sunglasses? Why is this Moai shooting lasers out of its eyes at me?! There are no answers to these questions. They are there only to surprise and delight the player.

What franchise would you say has the most Moai?
Gradius, though *Kirby* runs a close second. Given Konami are so far ahead of any other developer (four times the number of Moai than second-place Nintendo) it has to be one of their games and *Gradius* is one of their longest and most-popular series. They could have used the same Moai over and over in *Gradius* but they seemed to take pleasure mixing things up and keeping their appearance fresh. I'm thankful for their efforts in that regard, having seen so many of them.

Why do you think Konami features Moai so often in its games?
Moai in videogames existed before Konami but it took the concept and ran with it. First, Japan has its own sort of Moai (Moyai, inspired by the Easter Island's Moai) that were carved into soft stones on the island of Nii-jima in the sea south of Tokyo. Next, in September 1980, a reproduction of one of the most recognisable Nii-jima Moyai was placed in Shibuya, in the heart of Tokyo. But, perhaps most importantly, one of Konami's staff was Yoshinori Sasaki – affectionately known as 'Moai Sasaki' because he was a big hulk of a man with a rectangular face. His first game at Konami was in 1984, the same year it started putting Moai in its games (the first was the arcade title *Pandora's Palace*). So, Moai was already a meme back in the corridors of Konami throughout the Eighties and Nineties. We're late to the party!

How can readers help?
Submissions are very welcome. The easiest way is to mention or DM @gimmemoai on Twitter or add them to the Moai Games threads on popular retro gaming forums such as retrogameboards, rrlmukforum and ResetEra. I'm still amazed how many Moai are sitting in plain sight in common and well-known games that are still yet to be submitted. Gotta catch 'em all, as they say!

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

MAY 2006 – A legendary character returns to rescue her reputation, an impressive run of software continues to make the DS irresistible and Daxter breaks from Jak to go it alone. Nick Thorpe peeks into the past once again to deliver yesterday's hottest news

NEWS MAY 2006

On 8 May, a bizarre incident took place on BBC News 24 during a piece on the court case between Apple Computers and Apple Corps. Intending to interview Newswireless editor Guy Kewney, Karen Bowerman instead found herself interviewing Guy Goma, a visibly shocked Congolese graduate who attempted to answer the questions given. Goma was actually at the BBC to interview for a job in the IT department, but he was not hired.

High-definition TV broadcasts began in the UK on 15 May, with the launch of the trial BBC HD service. Previously, high-definition content had only been available on an on-demand basis via Telewest's TVDrive service, launched in December 2005. On 22 May, Sky HD launched with new HD channels including versions of Sky's Cinema and Sports channels.

The finals of the Eurovision Song Contest took place on 20 May, with Lordi delivering Finland's first-ever victory in the competition. The song *Hard Rock Hallelujah* and the band's monster masks were unconventional choices for Eurovision, but left an impression on audiences across the continent, earning 12 point scores from eight nations.

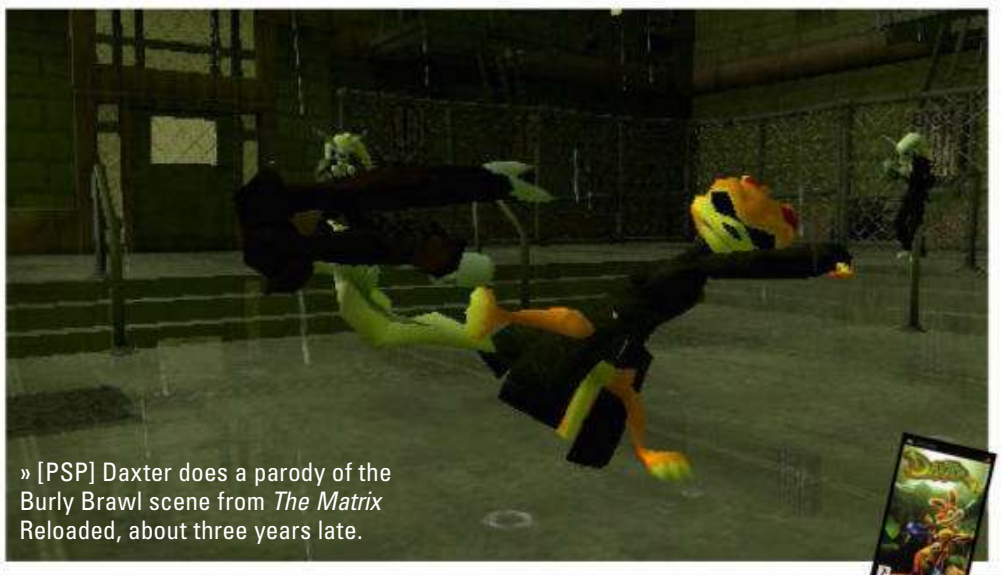
» [PC] After a rocky transition away from the 32-bit era, Lara Croft was back with a vengeance.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MAY 2006

After the disaster that was *Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness* and a transfer to American developer Crystal Dynamics, could Lara Croft regain her relevance? The reception to *Tomb Raider: Legend* certainly suggested so. In its 8/10 review of the Xbox version, *Edge* drew comparisons to *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* and described Lara Croft's character model as "one of the best ever created", but noted that the game "knowingly sacrificed a considerable part of the purity" of past games by reducing the emphasis on exploration. The game was broadly well received across platforms, earning 8/10 from *Official Xbox 360* and 7/10 from *X-360*, 7/10 from *games™* and 72% from *Play* for the PS2 version, and 80% in *PC Gamer*.

The Nintendo DS continued to impress, with *Metroid Prime: Hunters* earning 93% from *Nintendo: The Official Magazine*, 90% from *NGC*, 8/10 from *games™* and 8/10 from *Edge*. The control system may have induced a particular cramp nicknamed "Prime Claw" by *games™*, but the magazine still considered it a "smooth, attractive and compelling FPS that shows what the machine is capable of". *Tetris DS* was far less ambitious, but earned 90% from *NGC*, 82% from *NOM*, 8/10 from *games™* and 7/10 from *Edge*. The official magazine felt that the game had "silly oversights" like an inability to register your name with a high score, but praised the introduction of online multiplayer. Those seeking alternative puzzle action could try *Pokémon Link*, which scored 83% in *NOM* and 78% in *NGC*, with the latter describing it as "immediately compelling" but possessing "a shortage of real substance".

Over on the PSP, Daxter's solo platform adventure scored 9/10 in *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, 89% in *Go Play* and 7/10 from both *games™* and *Edge*. Every magazine praised its graphics and *Go Play* considered it "a shining light to all developers wanting to reinvigorate an ageing genre", with scores diverging over long-term appeal – the official magazine felt that it "*never* gets dull" but



» [PSP] Daxter does a parody of the Burly Brawl scene from *The Matrix Reloaded*, about three years late.

games™ felt that it suffered from "an inevitable descent into repetitiveness". *SOCOM US Navy Seals: Fireteam Bravo* brought Sony's tactical shooter to handheld audiences for the first time, complete with online play. The game was very much like its PS2 siblings, just with some control compromises – *Go Play* wasn't too bothered, awarding the game 91%, but *Official PS2* complained that it "slightly dumbed-down" the gameplay and gave it 7/10. *Gottlieb Pinball Classics* scored 86% for its "gorgeous" presentation and "fantastic ball physics" in *Go Play*, with *Official PS2* giving it 7/10 due to questions over its longevity.

Elsewhere, compelling releases were somewhat thin on the ground. *Urban Chaos: Riot Response* scored 8.6/10 in *OXM*, which felt that its graphics "could have been done better on Xbox" but that the gameplay "combines brutal violence and utter pandemonium with clever and varied mission objectives". *Official PS2* also liked it, awarding it 8/10 and describing it as "a satirical, heartfelt love letter to the kind of police force we'd like to join," despite complaining that "the main game runs out of steam towards the end". Rockstar's racing game *Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition Remix* scored 85% in *Play* and 8/10 in *Official PS2*, with the former saying that "you get a lot of game for your money" with the upgraded budget re-release. Despite quibbles over the inclusion of Coldplay, Keane and KT Tunstall in the song list, *Singstar Rocks* got 8/10 in *Official PS2*, with the magazine declaring it "probably our favourite" of the series to date.

GameCube owners could get *Odama*, though the combination of pinball, historical warfare and voice recognition did not go down well. *NOM*'s score of 63% looked downright generous next to scores of 48% in *NGC*, 4/10 in *Edge* and 3/10 in *games™*, which said it was "far too complicated for its own good". If you had a PC and wanted to try warfare of a more conventional kind, you could pick up *Red Orchestra: Ostfront 41-45*, a game that originated as a mod for *Unreal Tournament 2004*. *PC Gamer* felt that the "mercilessly accurate combat simulation" was worth its £15 budget price, despite being "stuck with a lot of incompetent players" in multiplayer games, and gave it 83%.

Join us again next time, when we'll be hunting down pre-E3 goodies in yet another slow gaming summer.

» [DS] *Metroid Prime: Hunters* was perhaps the best example of the 3D capabilities of the DS so far.

» [PS2] *Official PS2* suggested *Singstar Student Union* as an alternative title, and it's hard to argue.

» [Xbox] Who needs a justice system when you can just gun down criminals on sight?

CHARTS

MAY 2006

PLAYSTATION 2

1 – FIFA Street 2 (EA)
2 – Buzz!: The Big Quiz (Sony)
3 – 24: The Game (Sony)
4 – Black (EA)
5 – Driver: Parallel Lines (Atari)

DS

1 – Nintendogs: Labrador & Friends (Nintendo)
2 – Mario Kart DS (Nintendo)
3 – Sonic Rush (Sega)
4 – Nintendogs: Dachshund & Friends (Nintendo)
5 – Super Monkey Ball: Touch & Roll (Sega)

PSP

1 – FIFA Street 2 (EA)
2 – Lemmings (Sony)
3 – Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories (Rockstar)
4 – Pro Evolution Soccer 5 (Konami)
5 – Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max (Capcom)

MUSIC

1 – Crazy (Gnarls Barkley)
2 – No Promises (Shayne Ward)
3 – One (Mary J Blige & U2)
4 – No Tomorrow (Orson)
5 – SOS (Rihanna)

THIS MONTH IN...

Play

"There's really only two hours of game here," says the magazine's *Taito Legends 2* review. The author isn't a fan of "old and tedious and simplistic" games. We'd argue, but we're too busy playing *Elevator Action Returns*.

Go Play

"This game features Slipknot tracks," begins the magazine's *Infected* review. The author isn't a fan of the band's "terrible brand of random screaming." We'd argue, but we're too busy listening to *Iowa* for the 816th time.

X-360

"You see, what all these other games journalists won't tell you is this one simple fact – we're all effing skint," says new columnist Rab Florence. We'd argue, but we're too busy selling our kidneys to pay for our energy bills.

Score 18

Bat 'N' Ball

DRIVING ME BATTY

RETROREVIVAL

» BBC MICRO » 1981 » TIM DOBSON/RICHARD G WARNER

I pity my poor teachers at primary school – none of them were computer experts, but they were expected to operate three different types of computer, all with different operating systems. The Windows 3.11 machines were actually useful in terms of preparing us for future computer usage, and the Acorn Archimedes was at least modern even if we'd never encounter RiscOS anywhere else. We still had a lot of BBC Micros too, mostly because the school had plenty of educational games based on shows like *Through The Dragon's Eye* and *Geordie Racer*.

That was normally as close as we got to gaming at school, but for reasons I can't quite remember, one day my teacher decided to set up *Bat 'N' Ball*. It's like *Breakout*, but even simpler – there are no blocks to break, you just score a point every time you hit a wall that gets closer as the game progresses. As the self-appointed authority on all things gaming, I had to have the highest score. For a time, I did. When someone told me that was no longer the case, I wasn't happy, and I became even more annoyed when I learned that it was achieved by a bully that had been making my life miserable.

I should have just let it go, because it's not a particularly fair challenge. The ball's physics are wonky and in certain corner cases, it can pass right through your bat. Of course that's not what I did, instead taking every opportunity to knock the guy off the top of the scoreboard, both as a petty way of getting back at him as well as reasserting my gaming dominance. Failing should have taught me a lesson about how competitiveness and personal grudges can make you needlessly unhappy, but it took me years to realise that nobody would have given a damn if I'd succeeded. Thankfully, I've tamed that competitive drive now – at least most of the time.

Hi-score 8

GAMES THAT DEFINED THE AMIGA

DECADES AFTER THE DEMISE OF COMMODORE, THE AMIGA STILL HAS A HIGHLY LOYAL AND PASSIONATE FOLLOWING THAT FEW PLATFORMS CAN MATCH. TO CELEBRATE THE SYSTEM, WE'RE TAKING A LOOK BACK AT THE GAMES THAT DEFINED THE HOME COMPUTER IN THE EYES OF ITS AUDIENCE

WORDS BY NICK THORPE AND DARRAN JONES

When a massive leap in technology comes along, it tends to leave an indelible impression on you. You've probably experienced plenty of those moments – for us, our first tentative forays online stand out, as does the moment that DVDs made VHS tapes look like relics. The jump from 8-bit gaming hardware to 16-bit machines was just as huge, and for many of you that first experience would have been with an Amiga computer. Those formative experiences might account for the well-known devotion that Amiga fans feel for their favoured platform.

Whatever you wanted out of games, the Amiga did it better than the computers that came before thanks to its custom chips. Denise enabled the machine to generate colourful and detailed graphics, while Paula's strong support for samples allowed musicians to really flex their muscles. Partnered with a fast Motorola 68000 CPU and vastly more memory than the 8-bit machines, the Amiga expanded the possibilities for original games and allowed for conversions that could look and play more like their arcade counterparts. Of course, all of that raw potential would be for nothing if it weren't for the likes of the Bitmap Brothers, Bullfrog, Team17, Cinemaware and Sensible Software turning out great games.

To celebrate the Amiga, we've picked a selection of games that we feel define the platform. We're only looking at games designed for the original and extended chip sets – AGA games will wait for another time – but that still leaves us with plenty of fantastic games to choose from. So read on to find out what we've chosen, and be sure to let us know if your favourite made the cut.

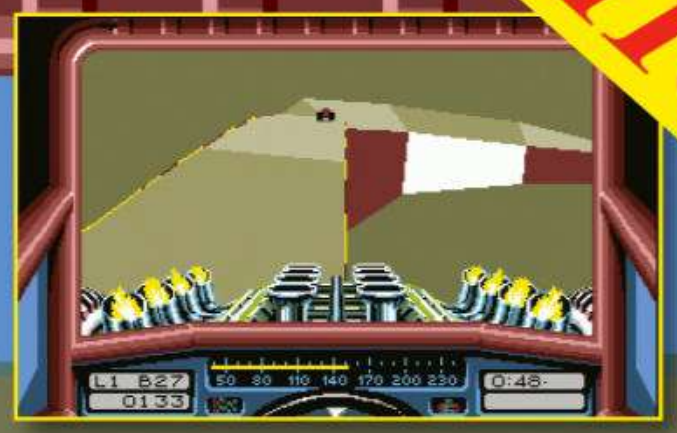
STUNT CAR RACER

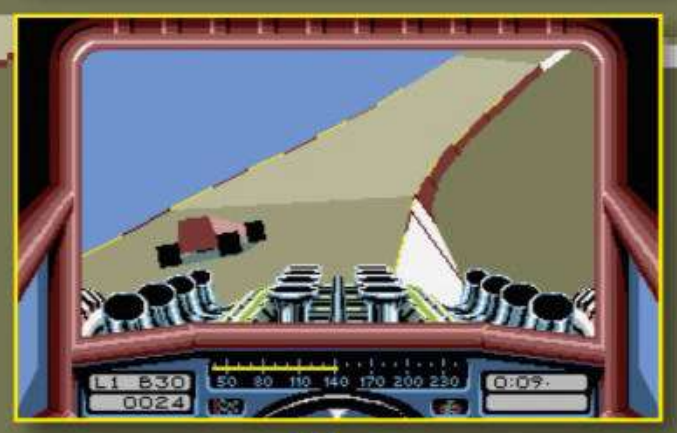
MICROSTYLE • 1989

If you want a great Amiga racing game, Geoff Crammond's classic is likely to be the first game out of anyone's mouth. Moving away from the realistic circuits he'd portrayed in *Revs*, Geoff Crammond created outlandish courses featuring steep banked corners and enormous ramps that enabled players to pull off some impressive stunts, with a solid physics simulation underpinning the action.

While *Stunt Car Racer* launched on the 8-bit platforms before it came to the Amiga, it's easy to see that the 16-bit hardware was highly beneficial for the game. The extra colour was nice, but the faster, smoother 3D performance conveyed a greater sensation of speed and enhanced the overall feel of the game.

Geoff Crammond would build on his work here with *Formula One Grand Prix* and its PC sequels, but *Stunt Car Racer* was never overshadowed, largely because of the appeal of its roller-coaster-style courses. It's been a fixture of lists of top Amiga games, and was included in 2022's The A500 Mini plug-and-play console.





PANG OCEAN SOFTWARE • 1990

The power of the Amiga allowed players to dream of arcade perfection at home, and while that didn't always come off in practise, this was one of the conversions that delivered on the machine's potential. Ocean managed to recreate the arcade graphics so well that you'll only notice a difference if you put the two versions side by side, and the gameplay is top-notch – *Pang* is one of those arcade games that has stood the test of time admirably, which means it's still a great time on the Amiga too. The music has a bit of the characteristic Amiga sound about it, but that certainly doesn't make it inferior. If you want arcade thrills on your Amiga, *Pang* delivers.

MY AMIGA PICK

"Harlequin will always be a favourite game of mine. A fantastic platformer which is full of great ideas and plenty to explore throughout the various worlds. Any game which features a Barry Leitch soundtrack also gets bonus points. I'll always use Harlequin as an example when people state consoles were better for the platforming genre."

PAUL MONAGHAN
Staff writer, Amiga Addict

AMBER MOON THALION • 1993

German developer Thalion was always a team to watch, thanks to its penchant for astonishing technical feats in games like *No Second Prize* and *Lionheart*. This RPG lived up to that heritage, with highly impressive first-person dungeon sections interspersed between overhead exploration scenes, as well as detailed and realistic simulation elements. It's a later game that sometimes goes overlooked, especially as an English translation took a very long time to arrive, but those who love it do so wholeheartedly and it really shows how ambitious Amiga developers could be.

TURRICAN II: THE FINAL FIGHT

FACTOR 5 • 1991

This run-and-gun platformer has achieved legendary status over the years, and it's very easy to see why. It's a fantastic-looking game, taking advantage of the Amiga's hardware with large sprites and detailed backgrounds, and the music is as excellent as you'd expect from Chris Huelsbeck – in fact, it's one of the platform's most iconic soundtracks. Then there's the game design, with large, varied environments, plenty of enemies to blast and huge bosses. If that wasn't enough, the platform stages are broken up with some shoot-'em-up action. Factor 5 even managed to cram the entire game onto a single floppy disk, capping off a remarkable bit of software engineering.

Although the Commodore 64 version of the game is the original design, the Amiga version has managed to secure a lasting legacy of its own. In fact, while the 8-bit version isn't readily available to play today, the Amiga version of *Turrican II* is easily found on modern platforms via the *Turrican Anthology Vol 1* collection and is as much fun as ever.

MY AMIGA PICK

"Not strictly a game, but for me I think it was the intro to Frontier… wow. It just blew us all away. And it wasn't just the technical aspects, it was also the cinematography and the music. The complete package, so 'next gen'. And I think it sill holds up as a piece of art today. The actual game however, I can't even remember! I played Elite on the C64 to death, but sadly Frontier just didn't do it for me.

MARTYN CHUDLEY
Cofounder, Bizarre Creations

THE SETTLERS

BLUE BYTE • 1993

Combining highly detailed economic planning with military management might sound appealing to hardcore strategy gamers, but it probably also sounds rather dry to many of you. If you've played *The Settlers*, you'll know that doesn't have to be the case – Blue Byte managed to cram the game full of character, even with the tiny sprites it uses. *The Settlers* is one of the longest-running series to originate on the Amiga, with a new game in the series, *The Settlers: New Allies*, due for release in 2023.

LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE

MAGNETIC FIELDS • 1990

Even on 16-bit hardware, trying to mimic the sprite scaling of arcade racing games was never an easy task, but Magnetic Fields went above and beyond here. *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge* is fast, smooth, and packed with rival racers, which would already be enough to make it a great game, but it also manages to cram in two-player split-screen racing. It's the kind of game that really gave you something to shout about, especially if you managed to pip a friend to the finish line.

FRONTIER: ELITE II

DAVID BRABEN • 1993

Elite was a defining 8-bit game, and its sequel updates that formula for a new generation. The freedom to tackle the game in any way you choose remains, no matter if you want to make your living in combat or get by as a trader. In fact, anything you choose to do is fine, since there's no end to the game. That's not the only way in which *Frontier* feels limitless, as procedural generation was used to create stars in the far flung reaches of the universe, giving you enormous scope to explore. *Frontier*'s 3D graphics stretched the Amiga, to the point that it really did chug in places, but for many that was a fair trade to make for the entire universe on a couple of floppy disks.

GAMES THAT DEFINED THE AMIGA

ALIEN BREED

TEAM17 • 1991

■ Team17 was able to achieve huge success in the Amiga market, and it did so largely by creating arcade action games that were better than most of the competition. *Alien Breed* was one of the developer's earliest hits, a top-down shooter that combined the atmosphere and iconography of the *Alien* films with the maze-like levels and overwhelming enemy assaults of *Gauntlet*. It's as difficult as that description might imply, but it's also the kind of game that keeps you coming back for more. *Alien Breed* was the sort of game that made you want an Amiga and it also had real lasting power as a series, spawning plenty of Amiga sequels as well as a successful trilogy of downloadable games.

MY AMIGA PICK

"Pro Tracker and OctaMED for turning the Amiga 500 into the first truly affordable studio in a box. It really helped birth the idea of the bedroom producer. I wouldn't have had the career in music had I not started on Amiga so young.

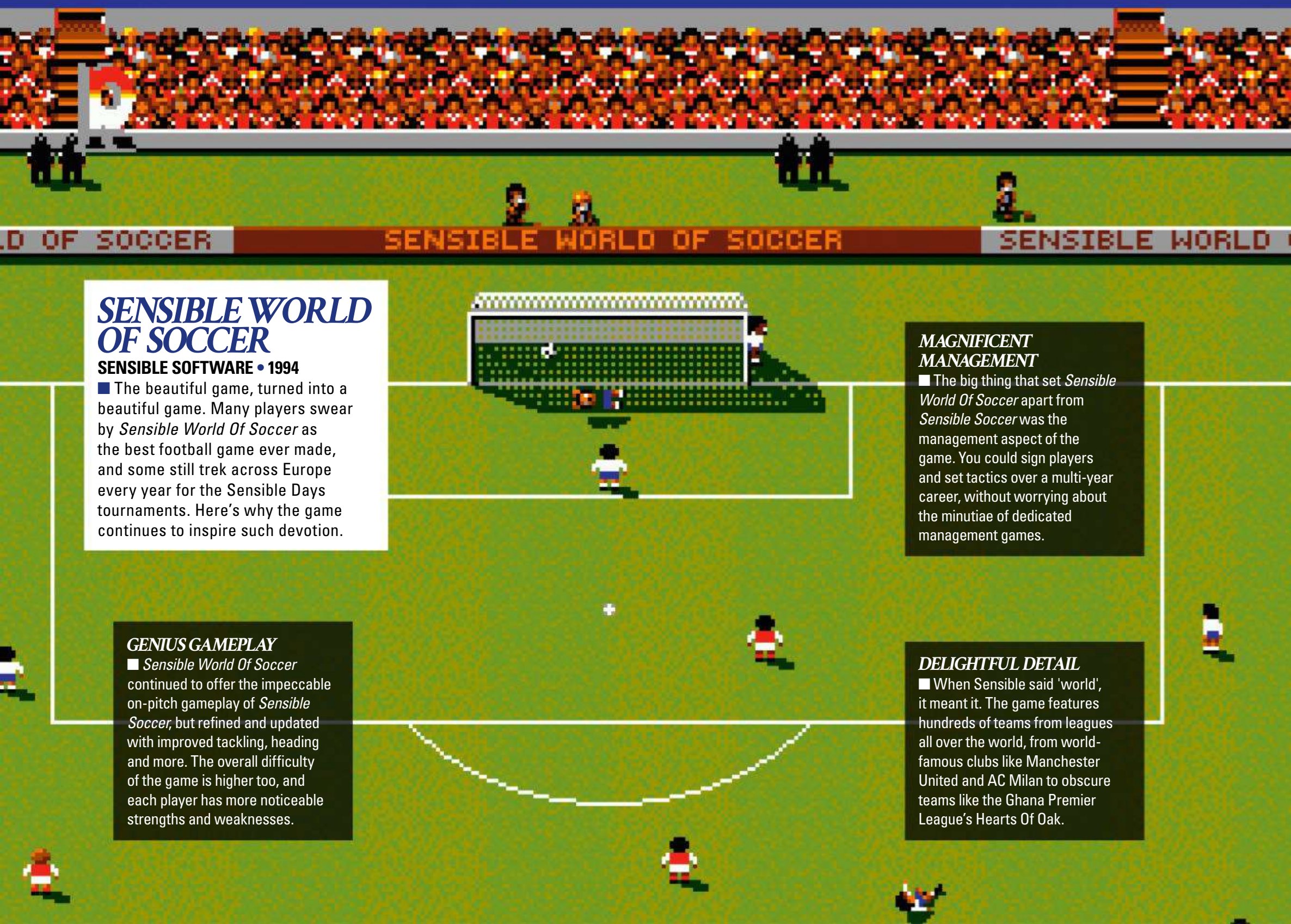
FEATURECAST

Composer, Final Vendetta

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

LUCASFILM GAMES • 1990

■ Though the Amiga version of this classic wasn't the lead version during development, we'd sooner walk the plank than suggest it wasn't a defining Amiga game. Users on Lemon Amiga have rated it the platform's best game ever, and no wonder – it's a truly memorable adventure with a sense of humour that shines through in every aspect of the game, from the insult sword fights to characters like Stan the salesman, the Fettucini brothers and the Lookout. *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* also appeared on the Amiga over a ridiculous 11 floppy disks, and the legacy of the *Monkey Island* series continues to the present day with 2022's *Return To Monkey Island*.



SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

SENSIBLE SOFTWARE • 1994

■ The beautiful game, turned into a beautiful game. Many players swear by *Sensible World Of Soccer* as the best football game ever made, and some still trek across Europe every year for the Sensible Days tournaments. Here's why the game continues to inspire such devotion.

GENIUS GAMEPLAY

■ *Sensible World Of Soccer* continued to offer the impeccable on-pitch gameplay of *Sensible Soccer*, but refined and updated with improved tackling, heading and more. The overall difficulty of the game is higher too, and each player has more noticeable strengths and weaknesses.

MAGNIFICENT MANAGEMENT

■ The big thing that set *Sensible World Of Soccer* apart from *Sensible Soccer* was the management aspect of the game. You could sign players and set tactics over a multi-year career, without worrying about the minutiae of dedicated management games.

DELIGHTFUL DETAIL

■ When Sensible said 'world', it meant it. The game features hundreds of teams from leagues all over the world, from world-famous clubs like Manchester United and AC Milan to obscure teams like the Ghana Premier League's Hearts Of Oak.

ANOTHER WORLD

DELPHINE SOFTWARE • 1991

Few Amiga games have endured like *Another World*, which was widely ported back in the Nineties and continues to be made available for just about every platform, over three decades after its debut. Here's why the game never struggles to find a new audience.

CINEMATIC CREDENTIALS

Although the action is primarily viewed from a side-on perspective during gameplay, there are plenty of cutscenes that give you a close look at Lester and the world he finds himself in, making for a unique presentation at the time.

MY AMIGA PICK

"Another World is easily my favourite Amiga game. A masterclass of form and function, a work of art. I remember struggling to understand how a game as visually abstract, long and emotionally gripping as any movie could fit on a single 880K floppy disk. I still struggle with that. It was perfect.

MIKE MIKA

President, Digital Eclipse

PERPLEXING PUZZLES

Some of the scenes in *Another World* require real thought, and you're given no clues as to what to do. You can't always push through with violence, either – there are times when your enemies are better off alive than dead.

AMAZING ATMOSPHERE

The sparing use of music and the unique graphical style of *Another World* give it a feeling all of its own. That's further enhanced by the lack of standard videogame elements – there's no HUD, no scoring and no levels to beat.

HUNTER

ACTIVISION • 1991

You can't move for 3D open-world games today, but they were a real rarity during the Amiga years. *Hunter* is a fantastic example of how good they could be despite the technological limitations of the time, as players often had great fun just running around and commandeering vehicles, without ever engaging with the game's central goals. The Amiga was home to plenty of innovative concepts and while *Hunter* never got the commercial success it perhaps deserved, the game is well-recognised today for being ahead of its time.

MY AMIGA PICK

"The standout game for me must be Another World. At the time, adventure games traditionally used bitmapped graphics and spanned many floppy disks but Another World uses basic lines and flat polygons to present a minimalism that looks beautiful and lets the player's imagination run wild. Eric Chahi used clever rotoscoping techniques and use of the Amiga's blitter to ensure it ran fast enough on a stock Amiga. I never really considered videogames as art before Another World – the game is timeless.

DIMITRIS GIANNAKIS

Modern Vintage Gamer on YouTube

SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE

THE BITMAP BROTHERS • 1991

What would the ideal sport of the future look like? Ideally, it would have the fast pace and free movement of football, the targets and bonuses of a pinball table, and violence that makes the crunching tackles of American football look like a nice warm hug. Fortunately, that's not something we have to imagine thanks to this classic, which **Retro Gamer** readers voted as the greatest sports game ever in 2015. As well as offering great gameplay for one or two players, the game's metallic graphics and awesome intro tune exuded the kind of style that was a signature of the Bitmap Brothers, as seen in its many other Amiga hits including *Xenon 2*, *Gods* and *The Chaos Engine*.

SYNDICATE

BULLFROG PRODUCTIONS • 1993

■ Games like *Populous*, *Powermonger* and *Theme Park* ensure that Bullfrog will be familiar to any devotee of Amiga strategy and simulation games, but it's the violent tale of corporations at war that feels like the most relevant game in today's world. *Syndicate* gives you plenty of freedom to carry out your missions and loads of lethal weaponry to cause chaos with, which makes for a wild ride – and thanks to its control system, it's a ride best experienced on a computer rather than a console.

CANNON FODDER

SENSIBLE SOFTWARE • 1993

■ Although it bears the tag line "War has never been so much fun", *Cannon Fodder* isn't particularly pro-war – not that you'd know that from the tabloid controversy that surrounded the release of the game, due to the intended use of a poppy on the box art. Much like *Sensible Soccer*, the sprites here are small, but any humour is contrasted with more sombre elements including the permanent deaths of your soldiers and the graves that accumulate on the hillside. *Cannon Fodder* is more than a statement on the futility of war though, as you'll need sharp reflexes, careful planning and the occasional tank to make it through the 72 levels on offer. War is awful, but *Cannon Fodder* is excellent.

WORMS

TEAM17 • 1995

■ Artillery games had always been good fun, often making for some of the best public-domain games you could get for the Amiga. *Worms* managed to take the concept further and turn it into a commercial hit with some slick presentation and humorous weaponry, from exploding sheep to the eternally amusing baseball bat. It wasn't just a triumph of presentation though, thanks to extra strategic wrinkles like the ability to tunnel into terrain and the need to account for random wind movements.

Worms is a multiplayer classic, and turned out to be the last major cross-platform hit to originate on the Amiga. The success of the game helped Team17 to become one of the few noteworthy Amiga developers to survive to the present day, and the studio recognised that by releasing *Worms: The Director's Cut* as its farewell to the platform in 1997. You can find that version on The A500 Mini, or pick up a more recent release like *Worms WMD* on modern platforms. Either way, get some friends round and you'll have a great time.

ZOOL

GREMLIN GRAPHICS • 1992

Few games sum up the Nineties like Gremlin's *Zool*. This ninja of the Nth dimension had everything you'd expect from a game of the era: it was impossibly bright and colourful, it was a platformer, it featured an anthropomorphic character, and it came attached to a branded licence, Chupa Chups. It was also arguably one of the few Amiga games that captured the energy of console heroes like Mario and Sonic, although Capcom's *Strider* was actually one of *Zool*'s main influences.

It felt like everyone was trying to create their own lucrative gaming mascot during the Nineties and Gremlin was no exception. Consoles like the SNES and Mega Drive were becoming extremely popular, but many of the most memorable characters were confined to those systems. While we could have chosen Team17's Superfrog as one of the Amiga's defining characters, he never made the leap to consoles. Zool did and he found a lot of success. Granted his console exploits didn't generate the same high scores like they did on the Amiga, but it proved that Commodore's computer was more than capable of creating memorable characters of its own.

XENON 2: MEGABLAST

THE BITMAP BROTHERS • 1989

We were quite tempted to include *Armalyte* or the excellent *Apidya* here, but we feel this exceptional shmup deserves to make the cut instead. It's a wonderfully crafted blaster with a distinctive theme, interesting boss designs, an amazing soundtrack and some truly memorable weapons, including the devastating Super Nashwan Power that unleashes hell for a limited amount of time. It's a truly astounding Amiga shooter that leaves its peers in the dust.

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT

RANDY PLATT, TOM MCWILLIAMS • 1989

Although *Defender Of The Crown* was an early example of the Amiga's capabilities over its 8-bit predecessor, we're choosing to highlight this excellent adventure instead. *It Came From The Desert* is far more ambitious than its mediaeval counterpart, easily building on the many tropes that helped make Cinemaware's games so memorable on the Amiga. It's arguably one of the most film-like adventures on the system as well, effortlessly aping the B-movies of old and delivering likeable characters, engaging minigames and huge number of gigantic ants to kill.

LEMMINGS

PSYGNOSIS • 1991

Psygnosis' loveable critters migrated across to all manner of home systems but many will forever associate them with the Amiga. As a result, *Lemmings* is easily the defining puzzle game on the system and a title that should be in any Amiga owner's collection. The beauty of *Lemmings* comes from its sheer simplicity – guide your lovable rodents to the exit in the most efficient way possible. Like Liam Neeson, your lemmings have a particular set of skills and working out which ones are the most useful will maximise your chances of getting as many of the cute creatures to safety as possible. The cleverly designed levels allow you to tackle stages in all manner of inventive ways, while the delightful renditions of well-known tunes perfectly complement the mop-haired creatures.

MY AMIGA PICK

"I recall at the time the German developers Factor 5 that were behind the Amiga game R-Type. At Team17 we wanted to see very good Amiga arcade versions with smooth scrolling and good sound, very much inspirations for our own work, as we were sick of seeing 'lazy' ports of ST versions. Factor 5's game showed how Amiga versions should be in our book.

MARTYN BROWN

Cofounder, Team17

PINBALL DREAMS

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS • 1992

■ Nowadays DICE is best-known for its cutting-edge technology and franchises like *Battlefield* and *Mirror's Edge*, but back in the Nineties when it traded under the name Digital Illusions, it was known for its cutting-edge pinball games.

Starting off as members of the demogroup known as The Silents, the four friends that would form Digital Illusions created *Pinball Dreams*, an epic pinball game that not only highlighted their love of pinball, but proved just what was graphically possible on Commodore's machine. Famed for its inventive tables, super-slick scrolling and bright, colourful visuals, *Pinball Dreams* set a new standard for the genre on Commodore's computer and was only really bettered by the team's own efforts, when its two sequels (*Fantasies* and *Illusions*) arrived in later years.

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

REFLECTIONS • 1989

■ Reflections' game is perfect proof that you don't need cutting-edge gameplay mechanics to sell a new system, you just need astonishing-looking visuals and a majestic soundtrack. If you wanted to convince someone of the delights of Commodore's 16-bit system, loading up *Shadow Of The Beast* and shoving an Amiga in your shop window was bound to generate some sales for you. While its gameplay is basic and it has a difficulty that would make most arcade games blush, there's no denying *Beast*'s beautiful aesthetics and its moody atmosphere. While many pass it off as an elaborate demo that feels a little unfair on the iconic game. We'd argue that *Beast* was instrumental in convincing many 8-bit gamers that the Amiga was worth owning. It certainly managed to convince us at the time.

MY AMIGA PICK

"I remember hearing the music for Turrican (composed by Chris Hulsbeck) and being blown away that this machine was capable of making such amazing sounds. It seems simplistic compared to modern game audio, but the concepts of modular/tracker music set me on the path to my own career in videogame audio. That Paula chip changed my life!

BOB BAFFY

Sound designer/composer, Digital Eclipse

BATMAN

OCEAN SOFTWARE • 1989

■ The £399 'Batman Pack' was a tremendous success for Commodore and Ocean Software and was instrumental in bringing Commodore's 16-bit machine to the masses. Here are just a few of the reasons why everyone wanted *Batman* and an Amiga for Christmas.

MOVIE MAGIC

■ Like many of Ocean's licences at the time, *Batman* cleverly based its gameplay around key scenes of the film. This not only meant that levels were often instantly recognisable but could be tailor-made to get the most out of the machine.

SUPERCHARGED LEVELS

■ One of the big draws of the 16-bit versions of *Batman* were its sensational levels that focussed on the Batmobile and Batwing. Where the 8-bit levels were side-on, the 16-bit versions were tremendous into-the-screen extravaganzas that were breathtaking to behold.

DYNAMIC INTRO

■ Even before *Batman* started you knew you were in for plenty of fun. A moody title screen depicted Batman facing off against the Joker while samples from the movie play over the dramatic score. Great stuff.

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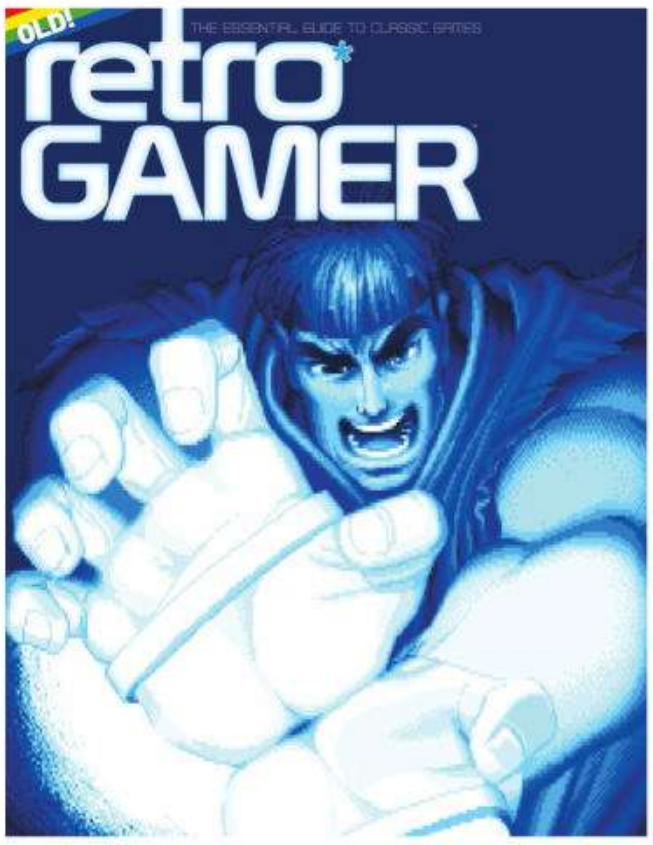

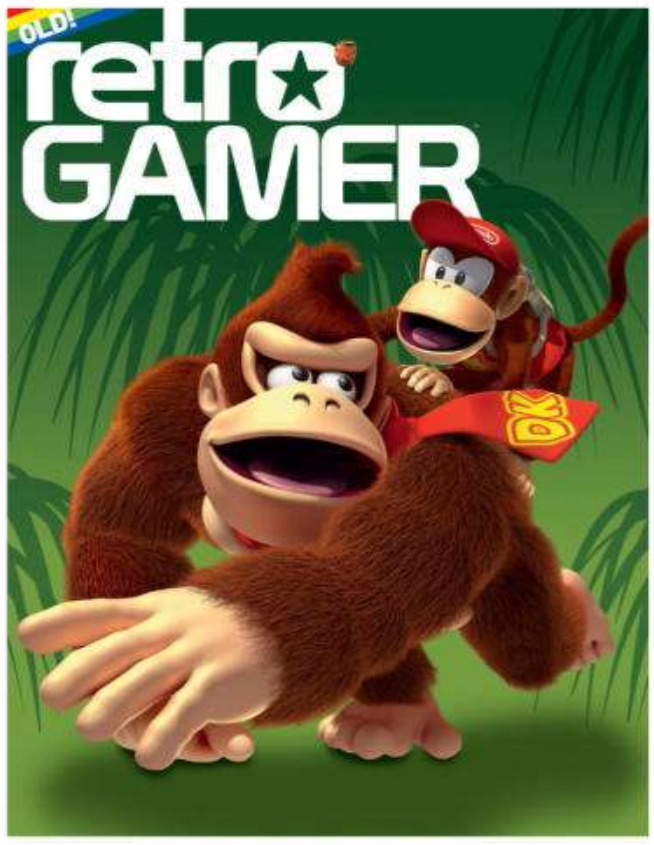

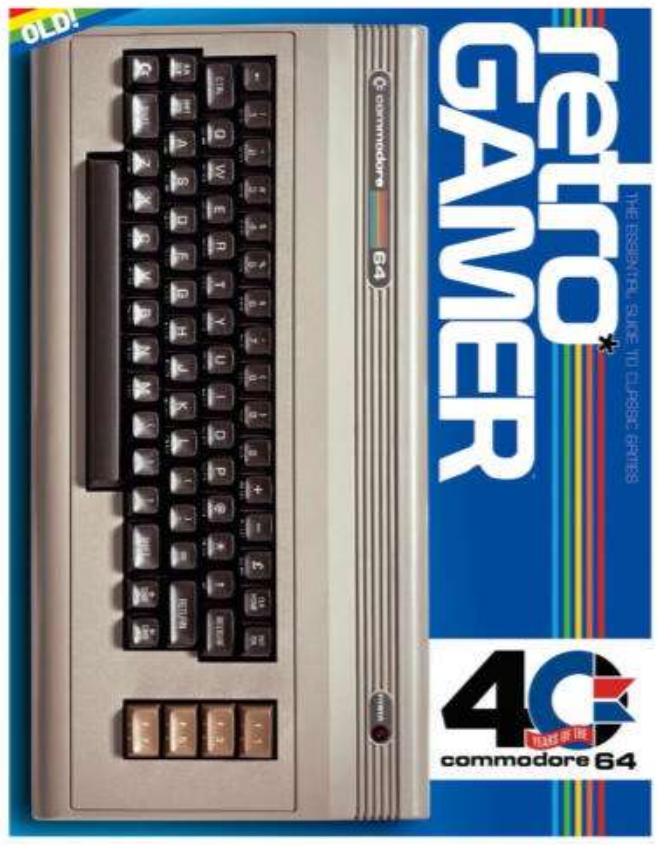

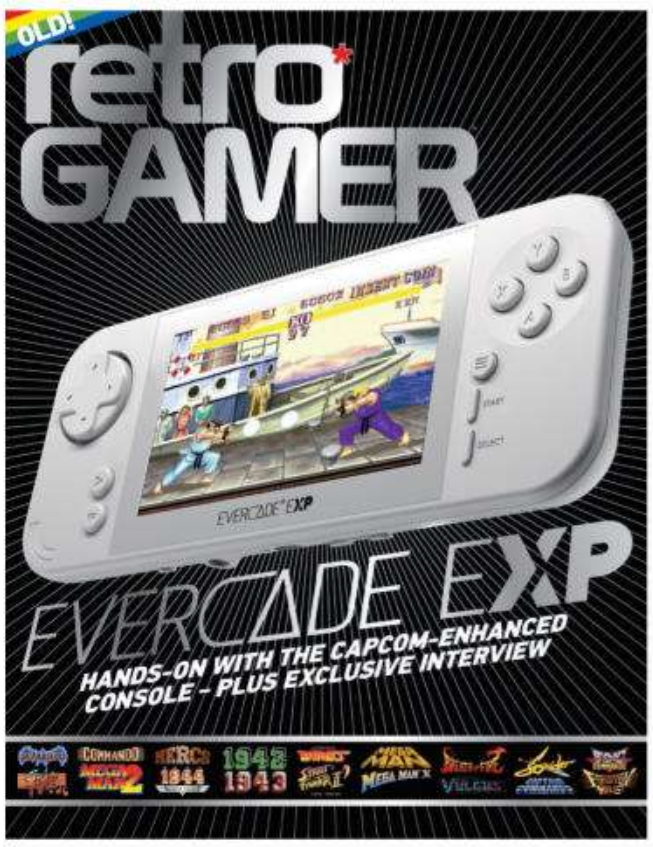

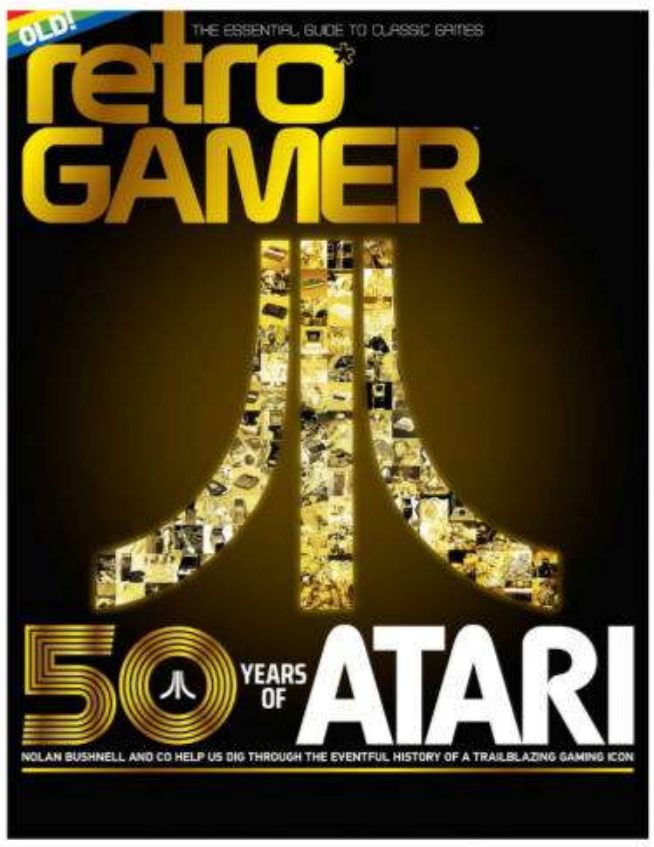
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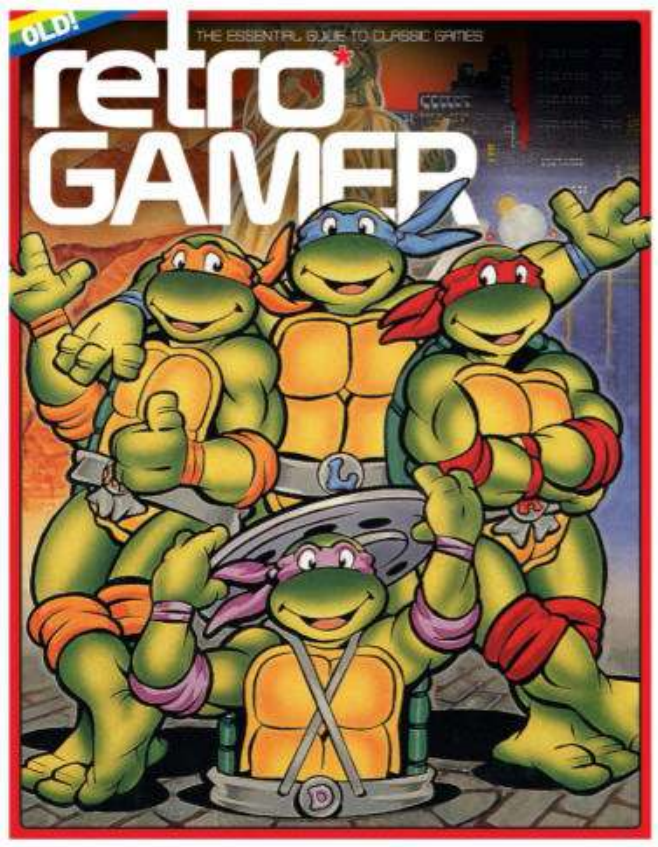

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THE EVOLUTION OF SHADOW OF THE BEAST™

THE STRIKING SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF SHADOW OF THE BEAST PUSHED THE AMIGA FURTHER THAN EVEN MOST DEVELOPERS HAD KNOWN WAS POSSIBLE IN 1989. FROM SEQUELS AND CONVERSIONS TO A PLAYSTATION REMAKE THREE DECADES ON, THOSE INVOLVED EXPLAIN ALL

WORDS BY GRAHAM PEMBREY

The impact of the original *Shadow Of The Beast* is perhaps best described through the lens of someone who experienced the game as a player. It was 1989 and 16-year-old Matt Birch was visiting a friend for a sleepover, when a relative lent the pair a new Amiga 500. Staying up late in the warm glow of Commodore monitor light, they played through disk after disk of what Matt recalls being fun but ultimately forgettable games. "But then around midnight we tried *Shadow Of The Beast*. It was a revelation. The music, the graphics, the gradient sky and the parallax scrolling. It was magical, like seeing *Star Wars* for the first time. Blurry-eyed in the morning, I got on the bus to go home and all I could think about was this strange world I had visited."

Twenty-seven years later, working as the head of his own studio, Matt would see his remake of the game published by Sony for the PlayStation 4. It was the latest entry in a series that's particularly memorable for how far it pushed the Amiga, but which also spawned sequels and conversions spanning several generations of computers and consoles. It's a collection of games known for standout graphics, music and atmosphere more than anything else, but one that also has more accomplished level design and clever gameplay depths lurking in its shadowy universe than is sometimes acknowledged.

Back in 1988, a year before Matt Birch and many others would discover his creation, game designer and Reflections cofounder Martin Edmondson was busy doing something that is alien to many of us; he was actually taking the time to read a manual before loading up a new machine. "I read the *Amiga Hardware Reference Manual* for a bit of light reading," Martin laughs. "I became really excited by the possibilities. Probably because my early interest in videogames stemmed from the arcades and games like *Defender* and *Robotron*, which always had far more powerful hardware than home computers. The Amiga was the first machine that got me excited about a proper generational leap above anything that had gone before."

Martin and his programming counterpart Paul Howarth were working on the top-down, futuristic pinball-style game *Ballistix*, which was published by Psygnosis and had an art style that fitted hand in glove with the gloomy and otherworldly vibe of the company. But even while finishing that relatively simplistic game, Martin and Paul were still spending time referring back to the Amiga technical manual and plotting to push the machine much further.

Martin says he wanted to create something that would give Amiga owners an edge over friends who owned the competing Atari ST. "Our intention was to create a game that really showed what the Amiga was capable of and how much more powerful it was compared to the Atari ST. At the time, most Amiga games were quick ports of the ST version with maybe just some very small improvements. That was understandable because at that point, the ST had a much larger user base. The Amiga however absolutely blew the ST into the weeds in hardware terms. The game we were creating was very deliberately tailored to the custom chips in the Amiga, almost like a demoscene approach. The Amiga had six main custom chips that we maxed out to create the game's unique look and effects."

Martin and Paul created a technical demo designed to make the most of this custom hardware. "We hadn't told anyone at Psygnosis we were working on anything new," Martin says. "We kind of surprised them with a demo. It ran in 60fps and had the polished graphics that you see in the first level of the published version of *Shadow Of The Beast*." That

» [Amiga] A wide array of imaginative enemy sprites stand in your way.

» [Amiga] A gunfight with a dragon is quite the sci-fi/fantasy mash-up.

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: PARALLAX UNIVERSE

FROM SCROLLING SCENES TO SONY SCREENS

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

■ Tailor-made to max out the Amiga, *Shadow Of The Beast* was a feast for the senses, from its multi-layered parallax scrolling to the atmospheric soundtrack. Conversions spanned across nine systems, from the previous-gen ZX Spectrum to the next-gen Mega Drive and the handheld Atari Lynx.

SHADOW OF THE BEAST II

■ Introducing NPCs, inventory items, dialogue and puzzles to the series, *Shadow Of The Beast II* was a more cerebral offering than the first game. But these additions meant graphical compromises were necessary, and for some the difficulty was dialled up a notch too far.

SHADOW OF THE BEAST III

■ Hitting a sweet spot between technical swagger and accessible gameplay, the final game of the initial trilogy holds up well. Four carefully crafted levels replace the continuous world of the first two games, while beast-slaying battling is balanced out with inventive puzzles.

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

■ Released nearly three decades after the series began, the PlayStation 4 remake faithfully nods to the original trilogy while weaving in cinematic cutscenes and new concepts, including *Bayonetta*-influenced, combo-driven fighting. There's a lot for fans of the original series to appreciate.

» Martin Edmondson designed *Shadow Of The Beast* and its Amiga sequels.

» John White managed the development of the first two games as a Psygnosis producer.

» Steve Hammond created graphics for the Commodore 64 conversion of *Shadow Of The Beast*.

» As CEO of Heavy Spectrum, Matt Birch revived the series with a PlayStation 4 reboot.

"OUR INTENTION WAS TO CREATE A GAME THAT REALLY SHOWED WHAT THE AMIGA WAS CAPABLE OF"
MARTIN EDMONDSON

» [Amiga] The lush parallax-scrolling background was quite calming until this guy showed up.

STAGES OF EVOLUTION:

SOUNDTRACKING THE BEAST

TIM WRIGHT ON SCORING THE SEQUELS

How did you approach composing music for *Shadow Of The Beast II*?

Martin Edmondson was very specific about what he wanted, even down to which presets David Whittaker had used on a KORG M1 synthesiser for the first game. I noticed his main theme had been influenced by *Metallic Rain* by Vangelis. I was keen to steer clear of this influence, but to take on the vibe of the music. After hearing the first two pieces, Martin seemed to relax.

How did the 'game over' guitar solo happen?

Martin sent me a cassette and said, "Tim, find a good guitarist and copy this song." I assumed, because he'd been in a band, it was something he had composed. I copied it as closely as I could with my guitarist friend Steve Nuttall. Years later, the internet would point out that I had in fact copied some short incidental music from the TV show *Miami Vice*.

How did *Shadow Of The Beast III* differ?

Martin seemed confident I could be given free rein. I had not long finished composing a piano theme for *Agony*, so I was keen to do something similar but with additional instrumentation. I reused samples from Psygnosis games I'd composed such as *Leander* and *Carthage*. I invested time into the outro and game over themes. The latter has since been remixed by me and others.

» [Amiga] A surprise scrolling shooter segment arrives late in the first game.

» [Amiga] Being able to travel freely between areas gave the first game an open feel.

» [Amiga] The original Aarbron can use his fists, but he also packs a mean drop kick

» [Amiga] This boss has you stuck between a rock and a hard face. [That's terrible – Ed]

▶ included the impressive multi-layered parallax scrolling backdrop. "The overall visual approach of the parallax was inspired by what you see when looking sideways out of the side of a speeding train, with the foreground trees and pylons speeding by, while the distant mountains appear to barely move." Martin was pleased to see the demo having the intended effect on Psygnosis cofounder Ian Hetherington and his team. "They grabbed various other members of the publishing team and art teams to come and crowd around the monitor, and immediately started discussing it becoming our next game," he says.

Among those watching the demo was John White, a Psygnosis producer who was just a few months into his job working for the studio. "When I first started in late-1988, there were just three external developers. Reflections were working on *Ballistix*, DMA Design were working on *Menace*, and Wayne Smithson was working on *Anarchy*. My job was to manage these developers, helping them bring the games to completion." Seeing Martin and Paul's new demo, John was cautiously optimistic. "Of course, it was graphically impressive. But I remember being concerned about whether the gameplay would prove to be good enough."

While Martin and Paul worked from home using Psygnosis' equipment, John would visit them regularly to check the work and

"THE MAIN CHALLENGES WERE GETTING DECENT GAMEPLAY AND BRINGING THE GAME TO COMPLETION"
JOHN WHITE

make sure production was progressing as it should. "They were pushing the limits of the hardware," John says. "For me, the main challenges were getting decent gameplay and bringing the game to completion. When you have the best developers, they are always adding more features. This is a double-edged sword, making the game better but extending the deadline. At some point, you have to say enough is enough."

After nine months in development, *Shadow Of The Beast* was released in an oversized rectangular box containing a T-Shirt and a poster. The front of the box was adorned with specially commissioned, futuristic fantasy artwork by the acclaimed artist Roger Dean. "It was decided early on to have a new size and shape of box to incorporate a landscape piece of Roger Dean's artwork," Martin remembers. "It must have been a nightmare for retailers. But it looked good and certainly stood out. We were all keen for Roger to have free rein and just give us his interpretation of the game's name. He took an interesting creative angle, making the creatures running away from the shadow look almost mechanical in their design."

The box wasn't the only thing that stood out. *Shadow Of The Beast* was a real audio-visual showcase for the Amiga. Reviews were strong, although everyone agreed the game was rock hard. "That's probably due to my arcade background, the fact that I enjoyed hard games," explains Martin. "It was compounded by the fact that I played the game so much during development and testing that I kept thinking it was a bit too easy. I should have recognised that and adjusted for it, looking back." The difficulty level meant most players would need to play and replay the game over and over, learning its traps and enemy positions. But the sense of intrigue and free exploration – the game effectively comprising of one long level, with sections you could come and go between – sold the experience to many. Martin agrees with the assessment that the game was, more than anything, a huge technical showcase for the Amiga. "The game pushed a fan-favourite machine so hard that smoke was practically pouring out of those custom chips. It was quite a sudden visual leap over what had gone before."

Shadow Of The Beast was enough of a commercial success for Psygnosis to start arranging conversions. Eventually the game ▶

would make it to the Mega Drive and the PC Engine among other machines. But one of the first ports to be scheduled, and the one that's probably most celebrated in retrospect, took the game a generation back to the Commodore 64. Scottish studio DMA Design took on the task, with Steve Hammond being responsible for reworking the graphics. "The whole thing was an experience," Steve tells us. "I did it more or less over the summer of 1990 as a freelance job. DMA had already been published by Psygnosis under their Psyclapse label and the conversion work was a natural extension of that. [DMA founders] Dave Jones and Mike Dailly knew me from the Kingsway Amateur Computer Club. At that point Mike and I had created a *Breakout*-style game called *Freekout* on the Commodore Plus/4, so Dave knew I could do graphics and it snowballed from there."

Steve began his work with several disks full of Amiga graphics. "I converted the sprites using Deluxe Paint; I could chop the colours down and scale them. But that was only the starting point. The result was pretty rough, so they'd need to be touched up or even redrawn from scratch. All in three colours, which for the C64 meant a base colour, a shadow, a highlight and the transparent parts. The backgrounds had to be redrawn from scratch. I remember using a lot of graph paper, and a paper notebook full of lists. It all ended up in 3in1, Tony Crowther's amazing C64 graphics utility. It simply wouldn't have been possible without it."

Working in a bedsit with a monitor between his Amiga and Commodore 64, Steve plugged away at sections of the game in chunks. Every so often, he would cycle over to take his latest work to Richard Swinfen, who coded the conversion, or into the DMA office. The end result was a well-regarded remake of the Amiga original. Steve even managed to put his own spin on the story, by penning some extra narrative text to keep players engaged on the additional loading screens that were needed over the Amiga version.

Creating a greater sense of narrative for the series was also something Martin aimed for when he started to plan a sequel. "I was a fan of text adventures, so I was keen to expand the scope of the puzzles to feel almost as though they could have come from a text adventure," he says. Released in 1990, *Shadow Of The Beast II* leaned into this idea by introducing a text parser that players could use to interact with NPCs. The very basic lever-pulling puzzles of the first game evolved into more complex scenarios, which might require you to explore several areas and add items to your inventory before being able to progress.

Adding these features would mean some technical compromises had to be made, as Martin explains. "We had to make big changes to the visuals to allow more objects to move over each other using distinct palettes. For example, if you kill a monster in the first game, you'll notice it disappears into the ground. That was because the game was unable to overlap the level scenery without wiping through it. That's no use for moveable puzzle objects, so for *Shadow Of The Beast II* we changed some of the technical approaches and swapped some things to sprites. That robbed us of

› [Amiga] No time for niceties with this dragon boss. Get straight on the attack.

› [Amiga] Run to the hills? Turning to fight might be a better option.

» [Amiga] Failing to save this character in time could ruin your playthrough.

» [Amiga] A chilling intro sequence from the second game sets the tone.

"THE BACKGROUNDS HAD TO BE REDRAWN FROM SCRATCH"
STEVE HAMMOND

» [Amiga] Typing into a text parser gave the first sequel a text adventure feel.

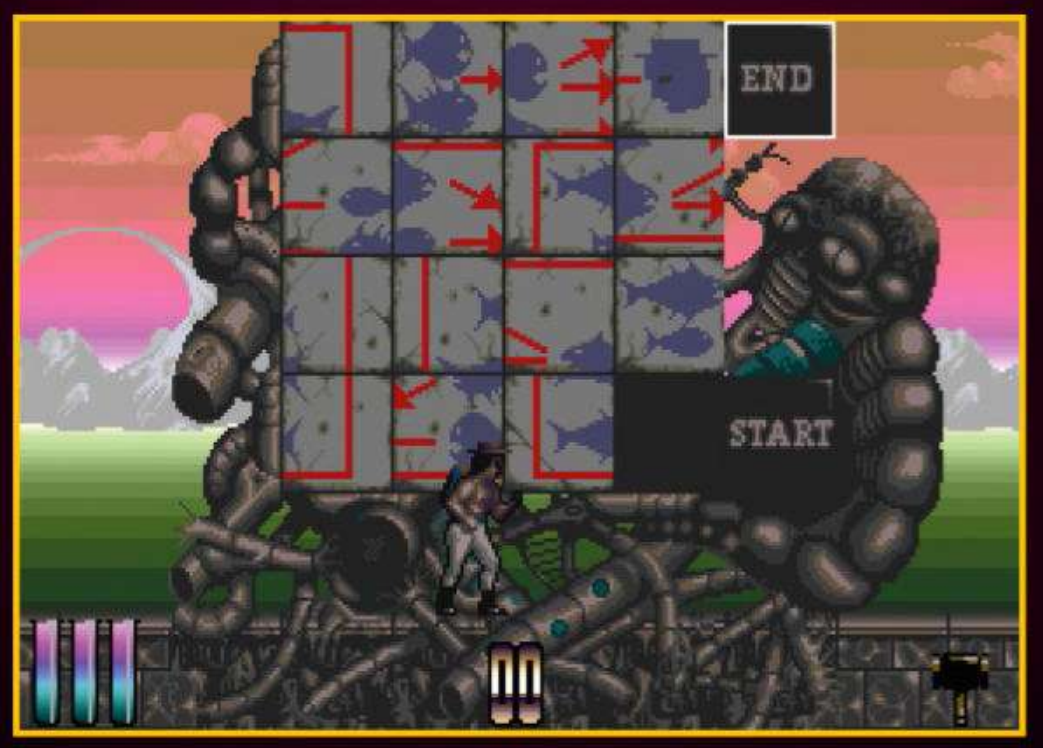
STAGES OF EVOLUTION:
FROM PLATFORMS TO PUZZLES

BRAINS MATCHED BRAWN IN SHADOW OF THE BEAST III

One level of *Shadow Of The Beast III* requires you to solve a giant slide puzzle, before commandeering a robot crane to transport killer fish between tanks so you can wade through. At another point, you'll need to sneak into a castle by hiding inside a barrel, which is then carried along a conveyor belt into the arms of an ogre.

Puzzles like these are just as central to the four levels of the game as the platforming and fighting. Martin says his desire to shift away from the fairly simple action of the original game towards these more interesting scenarios was influenced by his early game design ventures. "The first game I made on the BBC Micro [*Ravenskull*] was an 'open-world' four-way scroller. I was a fan of text adventures in the early days before graphics were really a thing, and those *Fighting Fantasy* books that offered the reader choice. With *Shadow Of The Beast*, I was trying to give the game that same feeling of exploration and adventure, especially so with later sequels.

"The ability to go back through previously explored areas gave the player a sense of recognition of past achievement, but really it allowed more complex puzzles. Sometimes you could only solve half the puzzle and you'd have to go off and find further clues or pieces and return to it later."



» [Amiga] Coming through! Aarbron gains entry to a fortress using a handy battering ram.

» [Amiga] Baiting this creature into a trap is grimly satisfying.

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: EVOLVING AARBRON

TRACING THE STORY OF OUR SHAPESHIFTING HERO

FISTS OF FURY

After being kidnapped as a child and turned into a monstrous servant, Aarbron sets out to seek his revenge on the beast lord Maletoth. Fists are his main form of defence, but in later sections of the game a gun and a jetpack help too.

BALL AND CHAIN

With his curse partly lifted, *Shadow Of The Beast II* sees a half-human, somewhat dishevelled Aarbron on a mission to find his kidnapped sister. A ball and chain extend his attacking reach, as do throwing axes scattered around the world.

BOOMERANG KID

Shadow Of The Beast III sees Aarbron return in fully human form with a neat hat and a sharper modern look. This time our hero comes equipped with a boomerang shuriken that reaches far enough to make beast-slaying an easier experience.

A CLAW ONTO HIMSELF

Reimagining Aarbron's original journey, the PS4 *Shadow Of The Beast* gives our hero deadly claws that would make Wolverine proud. With shurikens, spears, a gun and a complex array of throws and combos to draw on, this time he's ready for anything.

sprite colour bandwidth for the character, so you can see that while there is more flexibility, there is less visual vibrance. You couldn't have everything, even with the Amiga."

The most advanced version of *Shadow Of The Beast II* was released for the Mega-CD. Debuting four years after the original, in 1994, it added some full-motion video sections in place of loading screens, and voice-acted audio in place of written dialogue. The conversion also made some adjustments to ease the difficulty level, which in terms of the Amiga version back in 1990, really hit a series peak. In several parts of the game, making a small wrong move, from pulling a lever the wrong way to not killing a particular enemy before it slashes a rope you need to climb down, can completely end your chances of progressing. That's on top of the flawless timing needed to get through devious traps and tough enemies. The reviews for *Shadow Of The Beast II* were more mixed than for the original, with some celebrating the thoughtful gameplay elements that had been introduced, and others bemoaning how unforgiving the game could be.

Given such a reaction, it makes perfect sense that Martin and Paul would strive to make *Shadow Of The Beast III* a more user-friendly experience. After a longer development time lasting two years, the game was released for the Amiga in 1992. Instead of presenting a continuous world to explore, the game was split into four distinct levels, with a brighter colour scheme and the hero Aarbron taking a human form. "In the first sequel, the increased complexity of the puzzles had gone down well with players. So I wanted to push this much further, and designed some really quite tricky and elaborate puzzles involving physics and object manipulation," Martin says. "We had to make even more drastic changes to the technical approach. But we had ultimate flexibility for level and puzzle design."

> "I WAS KEEN TO EXPAND THE SCOPE OF THE PUZZLES TO FEEL ALMOST AS THOUGH THEY COULD HAVE COME FROM A TEXT ADVENTURE"
> MARTIN EDMONDSON

As with the other games of the series, the sound and music were important to Martin. As a result he enlisted the help of Tim Wright, who had already contributed some excellent music to *Shadow Of The Beast II*. "I wanted the music to be a huge part of the game, really take advantage of the Amiga's sound chip and reflect the generally dark and forbidding mood. It took a huge chunk of the Amiga's memory and disk space, but it was well worth it," says Martin. "Music was a very underrated part of videogames back then, but it can bring so much atmosphere and emotion. I was pleased we devoted so much to it."

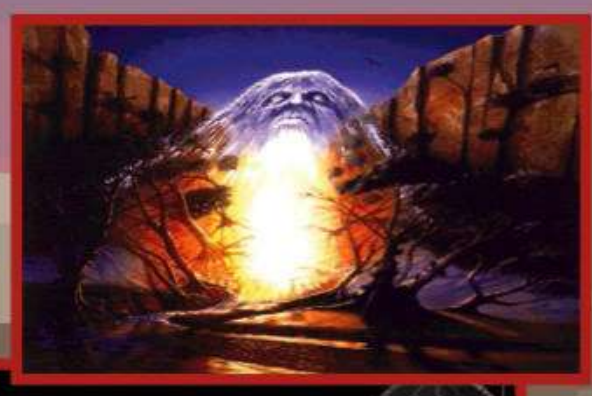
Shadow Of The Beast III achieved some of the best reviews of the series, including 91% from *Amiga Action* which reported that, "Everything works tremendously, with the platform and adventure sections having an instant appeal. It's also just a dream to play." A Mega Drive conversion would also make it into development. However, the port was dropped in 1995 along with several other Psygnosis conversions that had been close to releasing for Sega's console. This is no surprise when you consider the timing; Sony had recently bought Psygnosis, and the company was presumably keen to turn eyes away from the Mega Drive and towards its PlayStation.

More than two decades after Martin and Reflections had let sleeping beasts lie, Matt Birch and his team at Heavy Spectrum decided a wake-up call was due. Heavy Spectrum had built a good relationship with Sony while producing games for PlayStation Mobile.

» [Amiga] Bright colours and varied settings added to the atmosphere of the third game.

» [Amiga] A mysterious bearded figure guides your progress through four levels.

» [Amiga] Aarbron takes to the skies to meet the first boss of the third game.



» [PlayStation 4] Combat is bloody and brutal in the PS4 remake. Don't try this at home.

» [PlayStation 4] The remake really brings to life Roger Dean's mechanical creatures.

» [PlayStation 4] Pulling a Rage Chain combo requires deft timing.

» [PlayStation 4] Aarbron can take down countless enemies while mid-flow in a Rage Chain.

» [PlayStation 4] Familiar mountainous backgrounds are one of many references to the original series.

This included Matt and his team spending time at the company's office, which at the time had a home in the old Psygnosis building in Liverpool. "Every time I visited, I saw the trophy for Game Of The Year 1989: *Shadow Of The Beast* in the lobby," Matt tells us. "I mentioned to Sony all the feelings and visions I'd had playing the game back when I was 16, and how I would love to use the power of PlayStation to bring those visions to the players of today. They asked me to come back with a full pitch."

Delighted by the response, Matt got to work straight away. "I went back to the office and told everyone to close their computers, switch off phones, and gather around the whiteboard. I then told them we had a window to pitch on *Shadow Of The Beast* and that before we all went online and looked up details, I wanted to record everyone's thoughts, emotions and memories of the original game. I wanted to capture the nostalgia in detail before we were influenced by the reality. We had a great few hours writing up stories of playing it in our youth, or for younger team members, what they'd heard about it. It was a really special moment.

"The next step then was to combine what we as fans remembered loving about the original with what we loved about modern games, and what might be interesting to new players. We brought those together to create a new interpretation of Aarbron. We genuinely tried to respect the original game that was so dear to us. We took the pitch back to Sony and the rest as they say, is history."

Matt and the team paid close tribute to the original series, while adding new features including cinematic cutscenes and quite an intricate control scheme. The rhythmic combat has a fluid feel that brings to mind pulling combos in a fighting game. What did Matt want to keep from the original series and what did he want to do differently? "It was a very difficult challenge to strike the balance between something that would be recognisable and respectful for players of the original games, but also feel fresh and exciting to new players," he says. "There were some things though that I really felt we had to capture. The variety of levels in the original were key to building the atmosphere. David Whittaker's soundtrack for the original is also particularly legendary. As a fanboy, getting to chat with David about this during the project was a particular highlight. Ian Livingstone who composed our music was very clever at integrating elements of the original sound into a thoroughly modern soundtrack."

> **"WE GENUINELY TRIED TO RESPECT THE ORIGINAL GAME THAT WAS SO DEAR TO US"**
> MATT BIRCH

The extras of the game seem particularly geared towards retro gamers. They include concept art and memorabilia photos from the original, as well as the opportunity to play the complete Amiga classic. "One of our programmers, Ben [Carter], spent every weekend for months secretly writing from scratch an entire Amiga emulator that did not require any licensed material," says Matt. "We came in on a Monday and he revealed the original *Shadow Of The Beast* running perfectly on PS4 in a way that we could ship. It was a genuinely joyous moment to know that we could bring the original that had inspired us to modern gamers, alongside our new version."

Martin is glad to see the lasting effect of the series he started in 1989. "It's very satisfying that it's still a game I get asked about fairly often," he says. Will we see the beast rear its head again in the future? Matt Birch certainly hopes so. "I'd love to think that in another 25 years, another developer reinterprets *Shadow Of The Beast* in their own unique way for a new generation to discover."

The lasting effect the original had on Matt is clear to see. "The magic of *Shadow Of The Beast* stayed with me. The fact that this world created inside the Amiga had moved into my head really convinced me that games were becoming as powerful as books and films for triggering wonderment."

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: BEASTLY BOSSES

STANDOUT BATTLES FROM ACROSS THE SERIES

THE WHOLE HOG

After struggling through an underground area of *Shadow Of The Beast*, a humongous fire-breathing pig boss is just what you need. You'll need to come armed with a Power Punch power-up, then sneak in punches to the snout while avoiding spikes rising unpredictably from below.

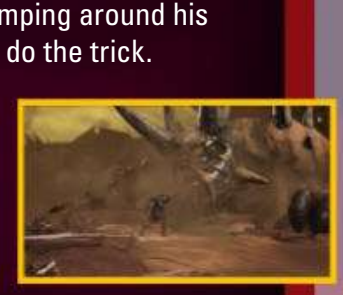
SEA MONSTER SURPRISE

Rearing its grotesque head from the murky depths just as you hop between a few rocks, this aquatic aggressor from *Shadow Of The Beast II* can easily catch you off-guard. No time to hesitate: some speedy, relentless ball-and-chaining to the face is in order.

HEADLESS HORROR

After thoughtfully making your way through a puzzle-heavy second level of *Shadow Of The Beast III*, facing up to a bloodied headless statue comes as a bit of a shock. Some nimble ducking and jumping around his spiked ball and chain should do the trick.

IFRIT UNCHAINED



During the Arid Wastes level of the PS4 *Shadow Of The Beast*, you'll see the giant beast Ifrit break free from chains before stalking you in the background. When the attack comes, somewhat counter-intuitively, you'll need to punch his fists as they swing towards you.

2775

ACTIVISION

Plaque Attack

A HECTIC BRUSH WITH DEATH

» ATARI 2600 » 1983 » ACTIVISION

One of the things I loved about the embryonic stages of gaming was just how inventive everything felt. It seemed like *anything* could form the idea for a good videogame, no matter how dull or pedestrian it might be and Steve Cartwright turned the mundanity of brushing one's teeth into one of the Atari 2600's finest shoot-'em-ups.

In many ways *Plaque Attack* shares similarities with Atari's earlier *Missile Attack*, as you're effectively protecting bases from enemy fire and the game typically ends when there are no bases left to protect. The spin here of course is that the bases you're protecting are someone's teeth and your ship is a tube of toothpaste. Enemy forces are represented by different types of food that range from slow-moving burgers and hot dogs to erratic waves of cherries and strawberries that move rapidly around the screen and can be hard to shoot down.

Let one of these devilishly tasty treats hit your teeth and the defenceless tooth immediately becomes encrusted with yellow plaque – if you don't shoot the offending item of food in time your precious tooth decays before your very eyes. Teeth grow back whenever you amass 2,000 points and once you reach the game's eighth wave you'll trigger a Plaque Attack and all the waves return but are now even tougher.

For me, *Plaque Attack* ranks up there with *Demon Attack*, *Solaris* and *River Raid* as one of the best shmups on the system. It's fast and furious, has some neat gameplay mechanics and is challenging without ever feeling unfair. It even has a sneaky time limit included, with your tube of toothpaste slowly depleting if you fail to finish off waves of food in time. Let it fully deplete and it's game over, otherwise you'll wring a few more precious points for every squeeze of the tube you have left. Cleaning teeth has never been so much fun.

ULTIMATE GUIDE

TURRICAN

INSPIRED BY A LOVE OF COIN-OPS AND PUSHING THE C64 TO ITS LIMITS, TURRICAN WAS ONE OF THE STANDOUT TITLES OF THE SYSTEM'S TWILIGHT YEARS. WELCOME TO MANFRED TRENZ'S EPIC RUN-AND-GUN – ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER CRIME!

WORDS BY RORY MILNE

» [C64] Energy-sapping acid drops and diagonal platforms give one of *Turrican*'s later levels a unique look.

» [C64] The timed challenges in *Turrican* include avoiding a series of bouncing spiked-balls.

» [C64] *Turrican*'s iconic lightning whip takes out enemies in places other weapons struggle to reach.

There was no obvious or defined route to becoming a computer-games developer in the mid-Eighties, and this was as true in Europe as it was in the UK or the US. Manfred Trenz had as unique a start as any. In 1984, he was a professional draftsman, then a day playing around with a friend's VIC-20 convinced him that he needed to buy a C64. After using it to code a simple helicopter game in BASIC, he realised how slow the language was, and so he taught himself how to program his computer in machine code.

It was his artistic abilities rather than his talent for coding that got him noticed, however, when he came third place in a graphics competition run by the German C64 magazine *64'er* in 1986. His entry was spotted by a small publisher called Rainbow Arts, and it gave him work as a freelance graphics designer.

In 1987, Manfred took an in-house position with the firm, and a year later he designed the graphics and levels for *The Great Giana Sisters* – which was essentially a C64 *Super Mario Bros* in all but name. This was removed from sale as soon as it came to the attention of Nintendo's lawyers, but an unperturbed Manfred moved straight on to designing, coding and creating graphics for his next project: *Katakis* – a C64 homage to shooters like *R-Type*. Its similarity to the coin-op didn't go unnoticed by Activision, who had the conversion rights to the game, but it made a deal to allow *Katakis* to remain on sale if Manfred developed the C64 *R-Type* for it, which he duly did in just six-and-a-half weeks.

"WHAT WE GOT ALLOWED US TO CONTINUE WITHOUT ANY HELP WHATSOEVER, AND THAT WAS MANFRED'S ENTIRE C64 SOURCE CODE. IT WAS SO WELL-WRITTEN"
MARK KIRKBY

CONVERSION CAPERS

HOW THE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF TURRICAN COMPARE

COMMODORE 64

Epic pre-game music introduces Manfred Trenz's original, which is a riot of colour and intense sound effects across its 13 challenging stages. It's consistently fast and it scrolls smoothly in eight directions, regardless of how many sprites it's juggling at any given time.

ZX SPECTRUM

There's sadly no music in the Spectrum *Turrican*, its sound effects are sparse and it doesn't scroll as quickly as the C64 title. Otherwise it's great. It's incredibly colourful with almost no colour clash, and its level designs are practically identical to the original's.

AMSTRAD CPC

Like the Spectrum title, the Amstrad *Turrican* doesn't have music, and its sound effects are functional at best. Its levels have the same designs and scroll at the same pace as the Sinclair version too, but its skillfully rendered multicolour graphics are more impressive.

AMIGA

While faithfully adapting the original's level designs, the Amiga *Turrican* takes its visuals, soundtrack and audio effects to another level. Particular praise goes to its smooth animation and use of a howling gale in place of background music on one of its later levels.

» [C64] As well as run-and-gun stages there are some cool vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up levels in *Turrican*.

» [C64] Protruding spikes should be jumped over in *Turrican* unless you've activated a shield.

THUG

DIAMOND

▶ As the conversion appeared in shops in early 1989, Manfred released a demo, in which he announced a follow-up to *Katakis* that he promised would have "effects you've never seen before and never-ending action", "more than 10 levels of a size of 1024x1024 characters", "big colourful and flicker-free master aliens" and "mega wicked extra weapons". He then set about his task, creating not one but three editors to help him create his project's sprites and backgrounds, enemy attack patterns and levels.

His inspirations were his favourite games, and he wanted to combine certain aspects of them in his own work. His most obvious influence was an obscure coin-op called *Psycho-Nics Oscar*, whose heavily armoured hero jumped around blasting enemies while powering-up his weapons using a system like the one in Konami's *Nemesis* (*Gradius*). He also raided the arcades for level transition effects and a lightning weapon, both of which he found in Taito's *Truxton*. He then added huge scrolling stages to the list of requirements for his new game, and the ability for its hero to be able to roll into an indestructible, damage-dealing gyroscope – in honour of the NES hit *Metroid*.

This ambitious design was already a tall order, but Manfred also wanted smooth eight-way scrolling, on the C64 initially and then later on the Amiga, which would be tricky to do on either system – let alone both. The newly appointed producer of Manfred's project, Julian Eggebrecht, had a plan. Manfred would focus on the C64 version while Holger Schmidt of the development team Factor 5 would produce an Amiga adaptation.

In the autumn of 1989, Manfred mentioned his new project in an interview with *64'er* magazine, although he wouldn't be drawn on details. Then in December, he called his interviewer back. The first level of his new game was ready to be previewed and to go on a demo disk that the magazine could offer to its readers. Titled *Hurrican* – the German word for hurricane, Manfred's project featured everything he had planned plus additional features such as massive bosses and parallax-scrolling backgrounds. The completed C64 version was expected in March of the following year, at which point *64'er* revealed that it had been

ENERGY

ATARI ST

A lot of effort was put into the ST *Turrican*, but it pales in comparison to the Amiga version. Given the hardware it's running on, the ST game's horizontal scrolling is impressive, but its music isn't great, and one channel stops when there are sound effects.

MEGA DRIVE

All but identical to the Amiga game, the Mega Drive *Turrican* differs only in terms of its music and sound effects. The latter are just as good if not better, whereas its soundtrack is less impressive. Its levels load instantly, unlike the disk-based Amiga title.

PC ENGINE

The PC Engine may have an 8-bit CPU, but the system's take on *Turrican* pretty much matches the Mega Drive conversion. Its only real failing is that there are some effects that it doesn't quite pull off, despite these looking and sounding great on the Mega Drive.

GAME BOY

Understandably, given the restrictions of the Game Boy, its version of *Turrican* has slightly beepy music and monochrome visuals. In all other respects it's an accurate adaptation of the C64 original, with smooth, speedy scrolling and satisfying sound effects.

"THE MEGA DRIVE AND PC ENGINE COULD DISPLAY HUGE NUMBERS OF SPRITES, BUT WE HAD ISSUES WITH THE LARGE ENEMIES ON THE GAME BOY"

MARK KIRKBY

renamed *Turrican*, which Manfred told the magazine should have always been the case. The following month, reviews started to come out, and the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Turrican was 13 massive non-linear levels split across five worlds. It scrolled smoothly in eight directions and had hidden areas to seek out. It had a wealth of different weapons – some of which could be upgraded, intense firefights against armies of opponents, bosses that dwarfed the player character and testing platforming. As if these epic run-and-gun stages weren't enough, *Turrican* also included vertically scrolling levels with an emphasis on avoiding and shooting down formations of foes. Pre-game, a menacing voice dared the player to continue, followed by a rousing fanfare of a title tune. In short, *Turrican* was a remarkable achievement to have been pulled off on the ageing C64.

The Amiga version of *Turrican* was released soon after, and it improved on its 8-bit counterpart not just with its more colourful, higher-resolution visuals, but also by having in-game music throughout. Understandably, *Turrican* was as celebrated by critics on the Amiga as it had been on the C64.

Versions for the Spectrum and Amstrad followed in the summer, thanks to Probe Software, with both games garnering scores in the 90s. Then in the autumn, *Turrican* came out on the Atari ST, and the Rainbow Arts release was as highly praised by reviewers as its predecessors.

Of course, with the reaction *Turrican* was receiving across formats, a sequel

» [C64] Unexpected threats such as showers of boulders come out of nowhere in *Turrican*.

TAMING TURRICAN

HOW TO TACKLE MANFRED'S CHALLENGING RUN-AND-GUN

PRECISE PLATFORMING

It's not always obvious which areas are within range in *Turrican*, and sometimes the only available platforms are directly above each other. These require you to leap up and away from the lower one and then back towards the upper one as you land, which is an acquired skill.

ASSEMBLING ARMAMENTS

Weaponry is key in *Turrican*, and there are various options to be found. Your rifle initially fires short bursts, but by collecting upgrades you can get it to send out longer bursts. Scatter shots and lasers are also on offer, and these can be enhanced by obtaining additional pick-ups.

COOL COLLECTABLES

Besides weapons, there are other useful items to collect in *Turrican*. As well as a shield that protects the game's hero and destroys his enemies on contact, there's an energy bar replenisher, extra lives and diamonds that get you a continue each time you amass 300 of them.

EPIC EXPLORATION

It's worth going off the beaten track in *Turrican*, as there are power-ups and diamonds to be found in the game's out-of-the-way places. This means overcoming obstacles that you would otherwise avoid, but dodging hazards and blasting down walls is all part of the fun.

WHO'S THE BOSS?

A recurring theme in *Turrican* is its giant set-piece mayors. Starting with a massive clenched iron fist, the boss fights go on to include a gargantuan metal piranha, a stone monolith and an enormous robot skull. The best approach with all of them is to simply blast and avoid.

» [C64] Obstructive blocks are a recurring feature in *Turrican*, but they're easily blasted to pieces.

was inevitable. Manfred was instrumental in its development, but *Turrican II: The Final Fight* was more of a group effort than its predecessor. Versions were released for the C64, Amiga and ST in early 1991, and all three scored top marks. Enigma Variations then produced Spectrum and Amstrad conversions that came out in the summer to much acclaim.

The winter of 1991 saw the original *Turrican* adapted for the Mega Drive, PC Engine and Game Boy by The Code Monkeys, with the transition of Manfred's creation to the three consoles proving to be a resounding success.

Around a year later, The Code Monkeys created versions of *Turrican II* for the Game Boy and Mega Drive, although their graphics were tweaked to accommodate a licence for the Jean-Claude Van Damme/Dolph Lundgren action movie *Universal Soldier*.

At about the same time, *Super Turrican* for the NES appeared in shops. Entirely developed by Manfred in short order, the NES title was an adaptation of *Turrican* that made excellent use of its host hardware.

What happened to *Turrican*'s legacy next was complicated, but between the springs of 1993 and 1994, Factor 5 produced *Super Turrican* for the SNES, *Turrican III* for the Amiga and *Mega Turrican* for the Mega Drive, which all reviewed well.

» [C64] *Turrican*'s player character can morph into a destructive gyroscope just like Samus in *Metroid*.

LASER

ROBO-SAMURAI

DEVELOPER Q&A

MARK KIRKBY ON ADAPTING TURRICAN FOR THE MEGA DRIVE, PC ENGINE AND GAME BOY

How did you get the job of converting *Turrican*?
When we first set up The Code Monkeys we were tasked with doing *The Games: Summer Edition* for the ST and Amiga by US Gold. On the American side it was produced by Epyx, who had a producer called Chris Baxter. He later left Epyx and joined Accolade, and he was happy with what we had done on *Games: Summer Edition*, so he continued to throw work our way. Then when Accolade got the rights to convert *Turrican* to other systems Chris asked if we would be interested.

How much contact did you have with Manfred Trenz?
We had full access if we needed it. But what we got allowed us to continue without any help whatsoever, and that was Manfred's entire C64 source code. It was so well-written. Even though all of the comments were in German it made no difference, because it was so clean – the guy was a genius. It certainly helped on my side, because I was doing the PC Engine version, which was almost 6502 at its core.

What challenges did you have with the conversions?
We had to create tools that would take the Amiga graphics we had been given and adapt them into the correct format. Because our conversions were for systems that had tile-based graphics, and the Amiga didn't. The Mega Drive and PC Engine could display huge numbers of sprites, but we had issues with the large enemies on the Game Boy. So it was a case of displaying them every two or three frames and taking advantage of the persistence of the Game Boy screen.

How much oversight did Accolade have?
We used a modem to upload the ROMs to Accolade every evening. It would burn them on its side, test the gameplay while we were sleeping and then send through massive reams of fax paper in the morning with the changes that it wanted.

How free were you to make console-specific enhancements?
Accolade wanted our games to be as close to the original as possible. The ability to multiplex sprites on the Mega Drive meant that we could have had much, much bigger enemies with much more functionality. But we just had sixteen weeks to do the three games, and that was the main kick in the teeth there.

Your conversions of *Turrican II* ended up being released as *Universal Soldier*. How did that end up happening?
That was highly annoying. We were about 70% of the way through the development when Accolade said it had a licence for *Universal Soldier*, and that it wanted us to change the graphics to fit that. We sent images to Dolph Lundgren to show what he looked like in the games, and he was happy. But Jean-Claude Van Damme *really* wasn't. I think we had to make five or six different changes. I mean, the Game Boy had four colours, what did he expect?

"THE ABILITY TO MULTIPLEX SPRITES ON THE MEGA DRIVE MEANT WE COULD HAVE HAD MUCH BIGGER ENEMIES WITH MORE FUNCTIONALITY. BUT WE JUST HAD 16 WEEKS"
MARK KIRKBY

In 1995, a PC version of *Turrican II* and a SNES sequel called *Super Turrican 2* were released, with the latter being far more linear than previous *Turrican* titles. Manfred worked on a follow-up called *Turrican 3D* for the PC and Dreamcast four years later, but the project was ultimately shelved.

Various *Turrican* titles later appeared in collections for modern systems in 2021 and 2022, and current rights holder Factor 5 seems open to developing a new game. Only time will tell, but until then Manfred Trenz's impressive C64 original still presents a compelling challenge to devotees of platformers and shooters alike. ✱

» [C64] *Turrican*'s multi-shot scatter gun gives you a good balance between range and coverage.

CLASSIC MOMENTS

R-Type

» **PLATFORM:** MASTER SYSTEM » **RELEASED:** 1988 » **DEVELOPER:** COMPILE

You absolutely loved playing *R-Type* in the arcades and were eagerly looking forward to getting the Master System version for Christmas. The big day arrived and you rushed downstairs to see a familiar-looking wrapped present under the tree that could only be a Master System game. Hastily unwrapping your gift you took the cherished game upstairs – it was time to find *R-Type*'s secret stage!

You knew it was on the fourth level, but it wasn't easy to find and took several attempts to unlock it. Needless to say you were as excited as an excited person that had a special reason to be excited. That excitement was soon tempered once you realised just how tough the secret level was. The gaudy colour scheme made an already tough game even harder to navigate, while frog-like enemies caused no end of hassle. The final boss was even harder, spitting out energy balls and being a general nightmare to defeat. It was going to be an extremely long day… ✱

BIO

Irem's *R-Type* made its arcade debut in 1987 and became an instant hit thanks to its distinctive biomechanical look, memorable bosses and challenging level design. Its success in arcades saw numerous home versions, many of which arrived on home computers in the following years courtesy of Electric Dreams. The PC Engine version led the way in 1988 via Hudson Soft and it sent ripples of excitement through the industry, thanks to its sensational-looking visuals. Compile's Master System adaptation arrived shortly afterwards and while it wasn't as spectacular from an aesthetic perspective its exclusive level means it remains highly desirable.

MORE CLASSIC R-TYPE MOMENTS

Enter Dobkeratops

R-Type's first boss was an imposing, dominating presence in the original arcade game and meeting it on the Master System is no different. Sure, there is a lot of irritating flicker to contend with, but it doesn't distract too much from the enormous guardian's impact. Ignore the flicker and blast away!

You Go Boom Now

Everyone knows about *R-Type*'s third level which is essentially one giant boss, but what you might not remember is that it leaves behind some spectacular-looking explosions when it dies. The Master System explosions look particularly good with the sprite-flicker actually enhancing the on-screen carnage.

A Deadly Barrage

One downside of *R-Type* on Master System is its rather gaudy colour palette. It actually adds to the game's drama on stage five as the hard-to-see enemies found there fire off deadly rounds of laserfire that will no doubt kill you the first time you encounter them. It's a memorable encounter, if not a fun one.

THE RETRO GAMER GUIDE TO

imagine software

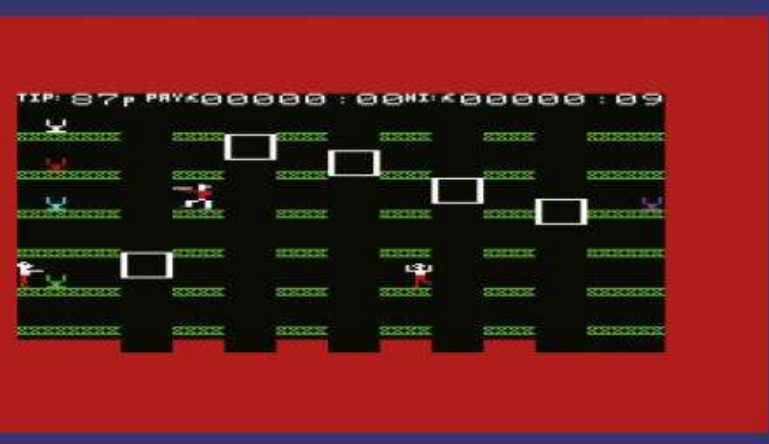
FEW DEVELOPERS WERE AS INFAMOUS AS IMAGINE SOFTWARE. RETRO GAMER REVISTS ITS MANY GAMES, BOTH GOOD AND BAD. HOW MANY OF THE FOLLOWING DID YOU GET TO EXPERIENCE?

WORDS BY DARRAN JONES

Imagine Software still remains one of the gaming industry's biggest cautionary tales. Set up in 1982 by Mark Butler and David Lawson, the Liverpool-based developer quickly earned a (rightful) reputation for its high-quality games and its unique, forward-thinking approach to packaging and advertising. Despite its outward appearance, all wasn't as it seemed at Imagine Software and even by December 1983 rumours were circulating that the company might be in some sort of financial trouble due to unpaid advertising bills.

Everything sadly came to a head for Imagine when it was chosen by BBC television director Paul Anderson to be the focus of its latest *Commercial Breaks* episode. Although there was initial reluctance, Imagine eventually agreed to participate and the documentary remains one of the only ways that you can still see footage of its legendary 'MegaGames', *Bandersnatch* and *Psyclapse*. Anderson was expecting to get a glimpse into the exciting and up-and-coming videogame industry, but instead he famously managed to film a company in tatters.

Imagine Software was unable to pay its huge debts and Ocean Software acquired the label, primarily using it for its numerous arcade conversions. Eventually though, even Ocean tired of the branding and quietly closed the label down after the release of the dire *Victory Road*. The original Imagine Software burned briefly but brightly, but its legacy lives on due in no small part to a truly cracking collection of great early games that entertained many a VIC-20 and ZX Spectrum owner.



WACKY WAITERS 1982

COMMODORE VIC-20

■ This is a maddingly tough game from Eugene Evans where you deliver drinks to customers. You need to use lifts to navigate the screen and switch between platforms, which is far harder than it sounds. While it's fast paced and reminiscent of early arcade games, it's also rather hard due to some questionable collision detection. We'd still recommend giving it a try though.

ARCADIA 1982

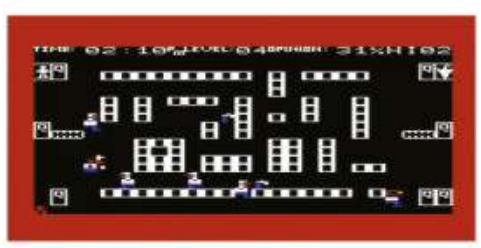
VARIOUS

■ Imagine's first game by co-owner Dave Lawson highlights a technical proficiency that would lead to its many arcade conversions. *Arcadia* is a tough but fair shooter with you gunning down wave upon wave of deadly aliens that diagonally descend towards you. Graphically it's a little on the basic side, but the simplistic-looking sprites allow for some extremely hectic gameplay. We love how the player's ship looks like an X-wing.

CATCHA SNATCHA 1982

COMMODORE VIC-20

■ An interesting take on the maze genre that revolves around recovering lost items in a shop. You must drop them off at specific locations, which will keep your approval level high. Let it drop to zero percent and you'll receive one of three written warnings. The game is made more difficult by customers dropping off bombs that must be disposed of as quickly as possible.



AH DIDDUMS 1983

VARIOUS

■ Another early effort from Dave Lawson and a rather interesting one to boot. You play a teddy bear trying to escape toy boxes by building steps with building blocks. While the concept is sound enough, it does suffer from tiny, flickery visuals and a rather steep difficulty level.

FRANTIC 1982

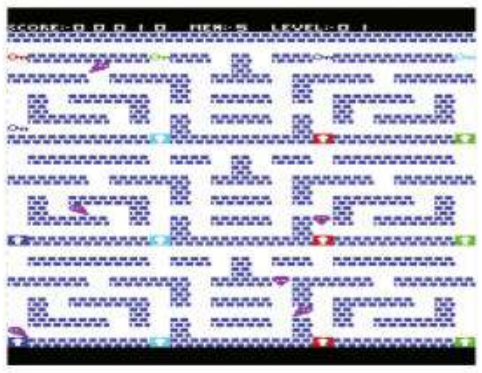
COMMODORE VIC-20

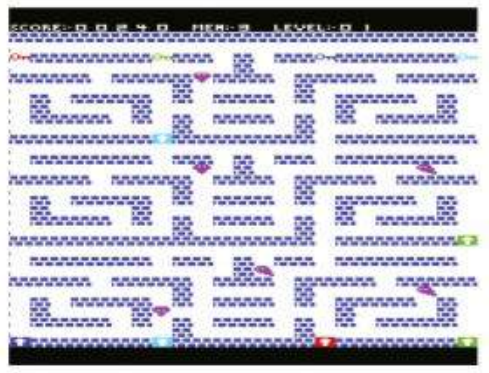
■ This is one of the early efforts from Imagine's Eugene Evans, who appeared in several news stories during the company's heyday because of his unusually young age at the time. The aim in *Frantic* is to track down enemies in your gun sights and shoot them down. It's made trickier by the erratic actions of your opponents and your limited amount of fuel. Frantic by name, frantic by nature.

BEWITCHED 1983

COMMODORE VIC-20

■ Here's an interesting, but infuriating take on the maze genre. You must use colour keys to open locks that will allow you to slowly navigate through the gigantic maze. You can only carry one colour key at a time, which would be fine if it wasn't for all the infuriating ghosts that haunt the maze's corridors. Oh, and some doors hide dead ends which only adds to the frustration. A decent idea, but this one is best left in the past.





REMEMBERING A LEGEND

JIM BAGLEY PAYS TRIBUTE TO ONE OF IMAGINE'S GREATEST CODERS

When did you start working with Jonathan Smith?

I started working with Joffa in 1988, when I started at Special FX working on *Gutz*, which was a great moment for me – to work alongside someone who had already done so many great games! He shared so many great tips with me, like his push scroller tech that I used in *Gutz*, which was great.

What was Jonathan like to work with?

Although he was in reality a shy person he was always a laugh, and helpful, if you ever asked a question about anything. I had the pleasure of working alongside Joffa for about nine to ten years, and we had a lot of laughs and good times that I will cherish.

What would you consider to be Jonathan's finest Imagine game and why?

Personally, I would consider *Green Beret* to be his finest game because it had so many of his trademarks included. It had his fast push scroll, it had his multi-channel music driver, and most importantly in his games, it had plenty of humour. He always liked to add humour to his games, I used to love playing *Green Beret* after school with my mates.

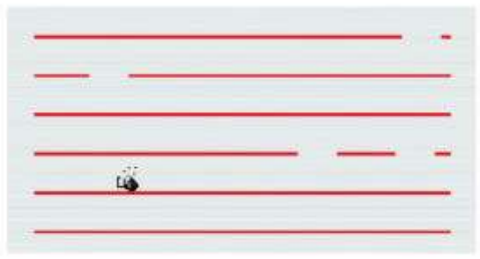
What was it exactly that made Jonathan's Imagine games so special?

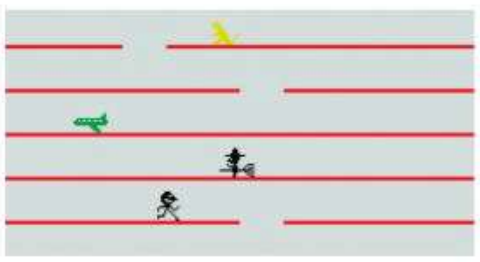
To me, Joffa was so much more than just a coder. He was one of the very few that were not only a great coder but a truly great artist as well. There are not many people who are good at both coding and art – it's usually one or the other, and only very rarely both.

JUMPING JACK 1983

VARIOUS

■ Coded by Albert Ball, *Jumping Jack* proved to be a real family affair as Albert's 10-year-old son Stuart designed the game's distinctive graphics. It remains a highly compelling game with the aim being to jump through the gaps of each platform until you reach the top of the screen. As the levels progress, more and more annoying hazards appear, turning *Jumping Jack* into a very challenging experience. Fast paced and very, very fun.

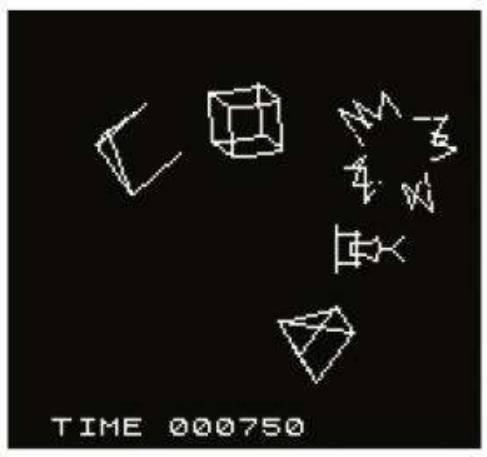




ZIP-ZAP 1983

ZX SPECTRUM

■ The most remarkable aspect of *Zip-Zap* is that it shamelessly rips off the main *Star Wars* theme for its title music. It's an otherwise tediously dull spin on *Jetpac*, where you fight through the cramped playing area collecting keys so you can move to the next equally tedious stage and die a little inside. It's not one of Imagine's best games, that's for sure.



STONKERS 1983

ZX SPECTRUM

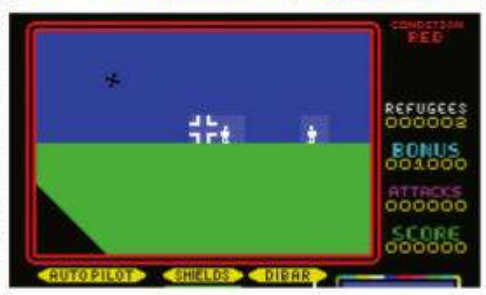
■ This is arguably one of the earliest real-time strategy games and was coded by John Gibson. Despite shipping with a number of bugs, its comprehensive gameplay, which saw you controlling infantry and artillery, ensured it became a firm favourite with many Spectrum fans.

> "ALTHOUGH IT CAN BE TOUGH, ZZOOM IS AN AMAZING TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR SO EARLY IN THE SPECTRUM'S LIFE"

SCHIZOIDS 1983

ZX SPECTRUM

■ This is an interesting cross between *Asteroids* and *Thrust* and it's a lot of fun to boot. Rather than shooting objects down you must use your intergalactic dozer to dump them into a black hole. It takes a while to get used to the controls, but it ultimately becomes surprisingly addictive.



ZZOOM 1983

ZX SPECTRUM

■ John Gibson made a number of hugely impressive games at Imagine, and this one is undoubtedly our favourite. You zoom around in a ship picking up humans while avoiding wave after wave of incoming enemies. The ground itself is a constant hazard too, so you need to make sure you don't fly into it. Although it can be tough, *Zzoom* is an amazing technical achievement for so early in the Spectrum's life.

MOLAR MAUL 1983

VARIOUS

As its name suggests, *Molar Maul* is a battle – a battle against poor mouth hygiene. Use your trusty toothbrush to scrub away germs and bad fillings before the decay level rises too high. It's another fast and furious action game from Imagine and yet another dynamic offering from the inventive John Gibson.

ALCHEMIST 1983

ZX SPECTRUM

This early adventure game has some lovely touches, including the main character's ability to turn into a majestic golden eagle. Set in an evil warlock's many-screened castle, you must constantly transform between forms to retrieve the four pieces of a deadly scroll. Huge, impressive graphics and some clever stage design make *Alchemist* an essential play. It's further proof of just how inventive Imagine could be.

BC BILL 1984

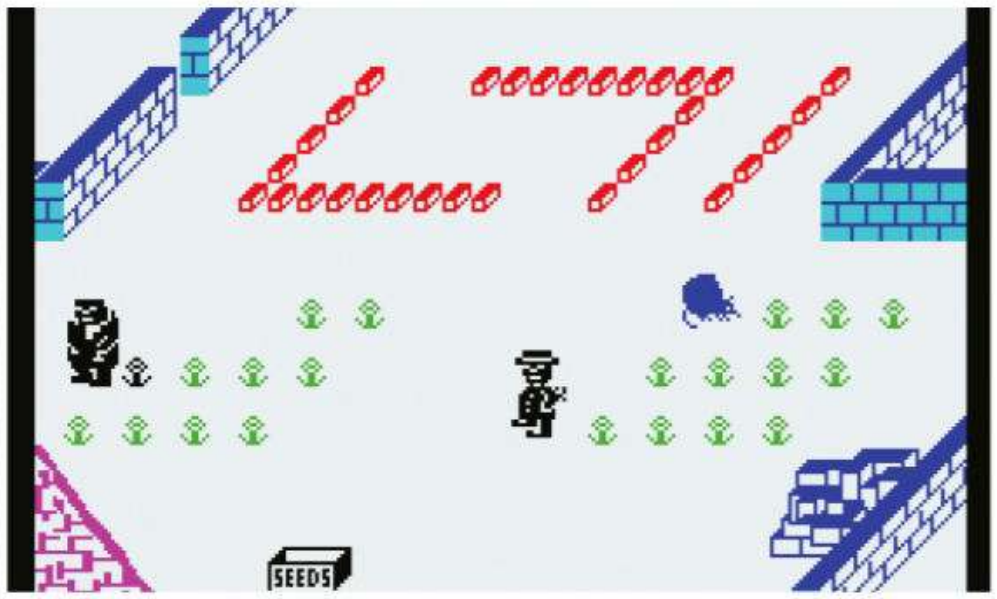
VARIOUS

There are some interesting mechanics going on here, mainly revolving around you raising a family for 17 years without losing any of them. The best way to do this is to club as many cavewomen over the head as possible and throw them into your harem so they can produce lots of children for you to feed. We'd like to think this is a terribly clever satirical take on male chauvinism, but as it came out in the Eighties it probably isn't.

PEDRO 1984

VARIOUS

One of the things that made Imagine standout in the early days was that it was a fertile breeding ground for fun ideas. *Pedro* is a frantic-paced action game where you must protect Pedro's garden from a string of pests by blocking entrances, replanting any plants they eat and simply stamping on them. You also need to keep a wary eye out for a seed-stealing tramp who appears from time to time. It's as fun to play as it is surreal.



COSMIC CRUISER 1984

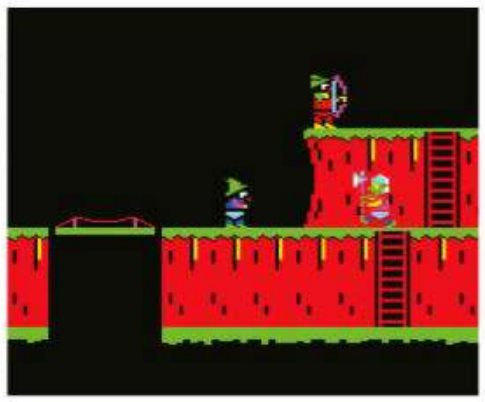
VARIOUS

This is a very interesting shooter that is played out over two distinctive playing areas. One sees you using a cannon to shoot down portals, while the other has you entering said portals as a spaceman trying to rescue any imprisoned friends. It's a clever little game that's let down by some rather clunky controls.

WIZADORE 1985

BBC MICRO

This game is notable for a few reasons. It's the only Imagine game to appear exclusively on the BBC Micro and it was the very first game that Chris "*Wing Commander*" Roberts coded. Heavily influenced by Ultimate Play The Game, you play a wizard in search of scrolls that can be used to attack enemies. While it's difficult, the solid level design and excellent visuals will keep you playing.



HYPER SPORTS 1985

VARIOUS

One of Imagine's earliest arcade conversions is also one of its very best. It not only has virtually all the events from the arcade game (only pole vault is missing) but also captures all its quirky charm, making it an essential play. Jonathan Smith's coding is incredible, offering gamers an amazingly authentic arcade-like experience. It's a real treat.

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 1985

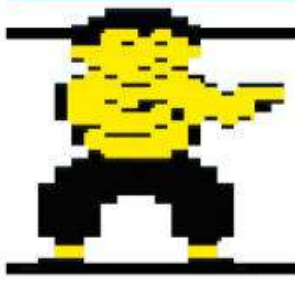
VARIOUS

■ The stick men might be crude, but this is still a pretty authentic rendition of America's most-baffling sport. There are not many game modes, but the AI is decent enough, although, if we are honest it's obviously far more fun when playing with a friend. One particularly nice touch we like is the big screen that shows off pitches and strikes.

WORLD SERIES BASKETBALL 1985

ZX SPECTRUM

■ Like *World Series Baseball*, this fine effort is also by Platinum Productions. The action is a little sluggish, but this is still a fun early version of basketball that caters for multiple players and has most of the rules from the sport. You can even change the court colour to make sprites easier to see.



"IF WE HAD TO PICK A FAVOURITE IT WOULD BE THE AMSTRAD VERSION"

YIE AR KUNG-FU 1985

VARIOUS

■ This superb adaptation of Konami's innovative one-on-one fighter is one of those rare releases with mainly great conversions across the board. Imagine did an excellent job of capturing the combat system of the arcade original. If we had to pick a favourite it would be the Amstrad version, but they're all great fun to play.

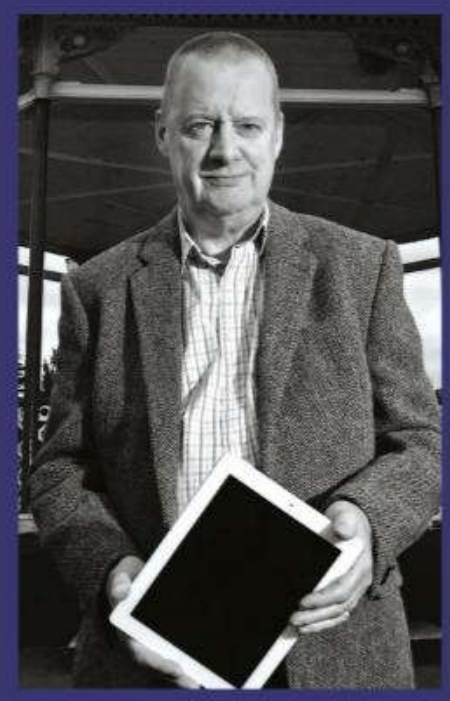
MIKIE 1985

VARIOUS

■ Pretty much all of the conversions of Konami's 1984 multi-screened arcade game are fantastic fun, but it's the fine Spectrum conversion from the late Jonathan Smith that remains our absolute favourite to this day. It's a complete package, boasting excellent controls, including every single one of the arcade game's stages, as well as a cheeky rendition of The Beatle's *A Hard Day's Night* for its title tune. Another sterling example of Jonathan Smith's epic coding skills.

BRUCE EVERISS INTERVIEW

ONE OF IMAGINE'S KEY STAFF LOOKS BACK



Why did the company gain acclaim so quickly?

In 1982 most videogame companies were run from home on kitchen tables. Imagine Software was among the first to be a properly run, properly staffed full-time organisation. We also marketed very aggressively and in *Arcadia* we had a fantastic first product.

Who came up with its marketing campaigns?

Microdigital in Liverpool was one of the first computer stores, opening in mid-1978. I ran it and did all the marketing, so got to know all the press and what worked and didn't. This hard-earned expertise was transferred to Imagine.

When did you realise it was all starting to go wrong?

During the last quarter of 1983 sales were rocketing. In December we had sales of just under a million pounds for one month, which was phenomenal in those days. Then in the first quarter of 1984 sales just disappeared, as you can hear Sylvia explaining in the *Commercial Breaks* video. Then one day WHSmith sent back a truckload of our games and refused to pay for them, saying they had been returned as faulty. We tested them and they were perfect. In actuality, the customers had just returned the games after copying them. We tried many different tactics to try and reduce the copying, which is where the MegaGames came from. From a business point of view the MegaGames were just an anti-piracy solution.

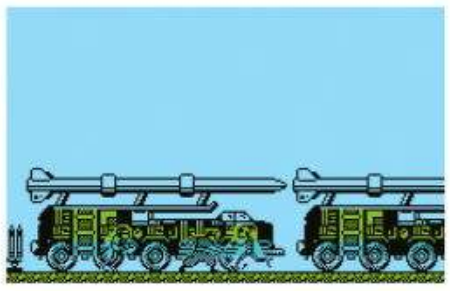
What was the reason for Imagine's downfall?

The principle reason was tape-to-tape copying – this just suddenly became the zeitgeist and so there was very little money left in the market to pay the wages of the people who made the games. Imagine was expensive to run with large city centre offices and two lots of prior offices to be paid for, plus a bloated development workforce. Also the flow of games just wasn't sufficient and the quality of those games started to lag behind what people like Ultimate and US Gold were doing.

GREEN BERET 1986

VARIOUS

Jonathan Smith created our favourite version (the Spectrum in case you're wondering) but all of Imagine's conversions are very decent. It's arguably as hard as the arcade original, with your titular hero running through the stages stabbing as many guys as possible. Pressing up to jump does get annoying, but it's the only real criticism we have.



KONAMI'S GOLF 1986

VARIOUS

There aren't too many different shots to choose from in this game of golf, but that's to be expected from an arcade conversion. The course design is very decent, there's some nice animation on the golfer, while all the conversions are of a good standard. Like *Ping Pong* this is another conversion that is ultimately boosted by a strong two-player mode.

SUPER SOCCER 1986

VARIOUS

There's certainly nothing beautiful about this interpretation of the popular game. The graphics are pretty dire with ugly-looking sprites and slow scrolling. The controls are very sluggish, while the gameplay is laughably simplistic. It's buggy too, with the company receiving many returns from unsatisfied customers. You should stick with Imagine's arcade-based sports games instead.

TERRA CRESTA 1986

VARIOUS

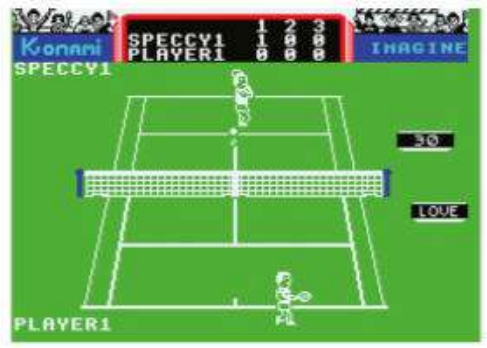
Jonathan Smith delivers another cracking Spectrum port, this time for Nichibutsu's obscure shooter. Starting off as a small craft you shoot down pods to slowly increase the size and firepower of your ship. The graphics are rather basic but the gameplay is top-notch and very satisfying. Sadly, Imagine's Commodore 64 port is less impressive.

YIE AR KUNG-FU 2

1986

VARIOUS

Unlike the arcade original, Konami's sequel started off life on the MSX. It's a pretty dull scrolling fighter and the same can be said for Imagine's various home conversions. They all look nice enough, but suffer from poor controls and some questionable collision detection.



KONAMI'S TENNIS 1986

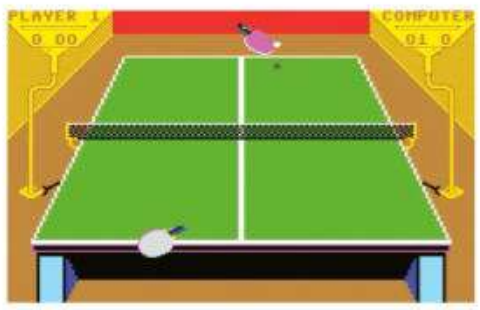
VARIOUS

Despite doing a very decent port of *Konami's Golf*, Choice Software's adaptation of *Konami's Tennis* is rather disappointing. While the graphics are perfectly adequate with some nice sprites, it suffers from iffy controls and basic gameplay. There's very little depth on offer here, meaning you should stick with Imagine's far more enjoyable *Ping Pong* conversion instead.

MOVIE 1986

VARIOUS

This is an excellent isometric adventure where you play a gumshoe called Jack Marlow who must retrieve an audiotape from a dangerous mob boss. While the visuals are truly magnificent, it's the clever icon-driven gameplay and stylistic speech bubbles (allowing you to type into them from the keyboard) that help make *Movie* so memorable. A great adventure that deserves to be experienced.



PING PONG 1986

VARIOUS

We lost many hours to this arcade conversion, again coded by Jonathan Smith. Although there are very few moves to learn, it's surprisingly deep, helped by some challenging, but fair AI. The highlight however is the truly excellent two-player mode that can get very competitive.

ARKANOID 1987

VARIOUS

Taito's take on *Breakout* receives excellent home ports from Imagine. While not every home system could replicate the arcade's spinner, the game is otherwise arcade perfect, with great visuals and all the power-ups and levels of the original.

ARMY MOVES 1987

VARIOUS

This was one of several Dinamic Software games published under the Imagine label. Split into two parts (a *Silkworm*-styled blaster and a standard run-and-gun) it certainly looks the business thanks to its astonishing-looking visuals. Sadly, it's too hard for its own good, with infuriating bottle necks and unfair level design. It does look amazing, though. Did we mention that?

ATHENA 1987

VARIOUS

This cutesy arcade platformer isn't too well-known, but that didn't stop Imagine. Its numerous home ports are all of a high standard, capturing the fast pace of the arcade original and its stylistic visuals. Like *Game Over*, it's mainly remembered nowadays for its box art, depicting a buxom lady.

GAME OVER 1987

VARIOUS

Yet more sadistic gaming from Dinamic Software. Every home version of *Game Over* looks incredible, but every version also features insanely difficult stages, overwhelmingly tough enemies and unfair level design that causes you to weep like a child. Despite it's sensational-looking aesthetics, it's more famous nowadays for its exceptionally risqué cover art, which featured a barely covered large-breasted woman.

FREDDY HARDEST 1987

VARIOUS

Freddy Hardest is another Imagine-published Dinamic Software game. It is also exactly like all the other games from the developer, meaning it looks as heavenly as an angel spliced with a Powerpuff Girl, but is as unforgiving as Clint Eastwood's final rampage in, well, *Unforgiven*. One highlight is that it is actually two games in one, being half run-and-gun and half adventure romp.

RENEGADE 1987

VARIOUS

The Amstrad and Spectrum conversions of Technos' classic arcade fighter are brilliant. The Spectrum one looks great, with stylistic cartoony visuals, but the gritty Amstrad outing is even better. It even mimics the three-button control system of the arcade original.

"A TWO-PLAYER OPTION HELPS MAKE IT THE BEST SCROLLING FIGHTER ON THE SYSTEMS"

SLAP FIGHT 1987

VARIOUS

Taito's innovative arcade shooter received a string of competent ports. While the devs should be commended for recreating the original vertical screen, it comes at the sacrifice of a cramped playing area. The shooting feels nice and solid, but the collision detection feels suspect at times. It's enjoyable enough but not one of Imagine's better arcade conversions.

THE COLLECTOR

MARK R JONES ON COLLECTING IMAGINE GAMES

Why collect Imagine's games?

You couldn't possibly have an expansive collection of Spectrum games without having any by Imagine. The titles released by the Liverpool Imagine are noteworthy because they were among the first games to have really great-looking artwork. And the later Imagine games I collect because I was working at Ocean when the majority were released. I have had some work published on that label so it's inevitable that I should own some titles.

What did you like about Imagine's early games?

The artwork looked great, and most still do. *Alchemist* was the one I played most back when it was new but I think *Jumping Jack* is the best. It might look really simple, but it has that 'one more go' thing.

What impact did the BBC's *Commercial Breaks* documentary have on you at the time?

I remember catching the original broadcast by accident. It was the first time I'd seen anything about games on the telly. I'd seen *Micro Live* and things with Fred Harris in previously but they showed us stuff we never used at home. To see Imagine and Ocean on the TV and learn a bit about how these games were made was fascinating to my 14-year-old self.

Little did I know that in three years I'd be walking around those very corridors shown on telly downstairs at 6 Central Street. I could never have 'Imagined' it! Ha!

SALAMANDER 1987

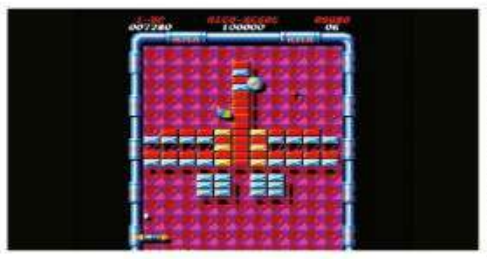
VARIOUS

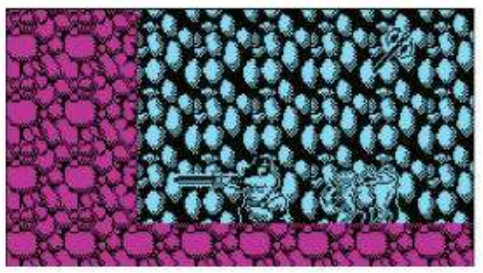
While the C64 conversion is a stunning replication of the Konami shooter, the Amstrad and Speccy outings are less impressive. In fact, the Spectrum version is absolutely nothing like the early screenshots that were promised in one prominent magazine of the time, being unrealistic and impossible mockups.

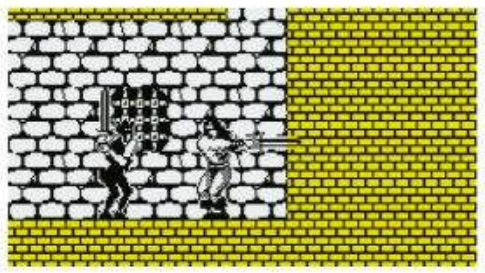
ARKANOID: REVENGE OF DOH 1988

VARIOUS

Taito's sequel receives another cracking port by Imagine. It's not a patch on Elite's wonderful *Batty*, but this is still a lovely take on the *Breakout* formula thanks to some clever level design, an exotic range of power-ups and highly addictive gameplay. The 16-bit versions use mouse support for added control brilliance.







RASTAN 1988

VARIOUS

Taito's popular scrolling hack-and-slash received a number of slick home conversions by numerous developers. Imagine handled the C64, Speccy and Amstrad offerings and while the Speccy and Amstrad versions impress, the C64 outing has ugly visuals and is extremely buggy to play. Special mention must go to Bob Wakelin's stunning cover art.

TARGET: RENEGADE 1988

VARIOUS

Imagine's sequel to *Renegade* is superb. The Amstrad and Spectrum versions are best due to their excellent visuals, weapon variety and a two-player option, making it the best scrolling fighter on the systems. The C64 and NES versions have superior visuals, but they're let down by being solo experiences.

THE VINDICATOR 1988

VARIOUS

Also known as *Green Beret 2*, this is an interesting, if flawed action game. Like many of Ocean's film licences, it's split into several different sections that riff on the shoot-'em-up and run-and gun genres. Sadly, the first section is the worst: a painfully dull trek through a bland maze as you attempt to defuse a number of bombs. It's soooo boring.

DRAGON NINJA 1988

VARIOUS

While the 8-bit versions of this scrolling fighter are competent, it's the excellent Atari ST and Amiga offerings that really capture the spirit of the arcade game. They look fantastic, cater for two players and feature all the stages from the arcade game. The only let down is an awkward control system.

GUERRILLA WAR 1988

VARIOUS

SNK's run-and-gun about the adventures of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro was a poor arcade game, but the ports are even worse. Ropey collision detection, sluggish movement and ugly visuals make this one of Imagine's weakest arcade ports. One to avoid.

RENEGADE III 1989

VARIOUS

Subtitled 'The Final Chapter', Imagine's last *Renegade* game is best forgotten as it's terrible. While the time-travelling theme allows for some interesting levels (punching dinosaurs is entertaining) it's let down by ropey collision detection, atrocious AI and bland combat moves. A truly dire game that's so weak it's amazing to think it's from the same developer.

VICTORY ROAD 1989

VARIOUS

This sequel to *Ikari Warriors* was never well regarded in arcades, so it's no surprise to learn that the home ports are equally forgettable. Amazingly, the 16-bit offerings are ropier than the 8-bit outings, with hideously ugly visuals and terribly unintuitive controls that do an awful job of capturing the rotary system used in the original arcade game.

MORE TO TRY...

- GALIVAN: COSMO POLICE (1986) VARIOUS
- FERNANDO MARTIN BASKET MASTER (1987) VARIOUS
- LEGEND OF KAGE (1987) VARIOUS
- MAG MAX (1987) VARIOUS
- PSYCHO SOLDIER (1987) VARIOUS
- TYPHOON (1988) VARIOUS
- WEC LE MANS (1988) VARIOUS
- COMIC BAKERY (1988) COMMODORE 64
- PLAY FOR YOUR LIFE (1988) ZX SPECTRUM
- JACKAL (1989) VARIOUS

Hardware Heaven

ESSENTIAL GAME
Silpheed

If you've just spent an absurd amount of money on a console, you ideally want it to play something that will impress people. *Silpheed* is the right game for the job. Although this shoot-'em-up is decidedly traditional in terms of its gameplay, it's a graphical marvel that uses video backdrops to create an illusion of incredible 3D performance. The CD audio is terrific too, with some excellent tunes accompanying the action. It's also not tremendously expensive, which your bank manager will probably welcome after the Wondermega batters your balance.

SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

Wondermega RG-M2

» **MANUFACTURER:** Victor » **YEAR:** 1993
» **COST:** ¥59,800 (launch), £900+ (today, boxed), £500+ (today, unboxed)

The original Wondermega was a curious product, a combination Mega Drive and Mega-CD unit for a Japanese market that wasn't tremendously excited about Sega's hardware. There must have been something in it though, as Victor – better known as JVC here – released this second model just over a year later. The cost-reduced model was 25% cheaper than its predecessor, making it more affordable but still considerably more than the ¥42,600 that the recently released Mega Drive 2 and Mega-CD 2 would cost you.

Beyond being smaller in size, the most notable feature of the RG-M2 Wondermega is its inclusion of six-button infrared wireless controllers as standard, with a receiver on the front of the console and controller ports on the rear. Beyond that it retains the Wondermega's characteristic features, including standard composite and S-Video ports and karaoke controls. This model of the Wondermega would later provide the basis for the North American X'Eye console, a similarly expensive hybrid unit which drops the wireless control support and relocates the controller ports to the front of the unit. ✱

Wondermega RG-M2 fact

■ If a 32X is attached to this model of Wondermega, it will block the CD tray lid from opening. For ¥5,000, Victor would replace your console's lid with a more compatible design.

PROCESSORS: 2X MOTOROLA 68000 16-BIT CPUS (7.67 MHZ AND 12.5 MHZ) , ZILOG Z80 8-BIT CPU (3.58 MHZ)

GRAPHICS: SEGA/YAMAHA YM7101 VDP, UP TO 320X480 DISPLAY (320X224 TYPICAL), 64 COLOURS FROM A PALETTE OF 512, 80 SPRITES ON SCREEN, PLUS SEGA 315-5548 CUSTOM ASIC SUPPORTING SPRITE SCALING AND ROTATION AND FULL-MOTION VIDEO

AUDIO: CD AUDIO, PLUS RICOH RF5C164, EIGHT PCM CHANNELS, PLUS YAMAHA YM2612 SOUND CHIP, SIX FM SYNTHESIS CHANNELS, PLUS TEXAS INSTRUMENTS SN76489 FOUR CHANNEL PSG

RAM: 512KB MAIN MEMORY, 256KB VIDEO MEMORY, 64KB AUDIO SAMPLE MEMORY

MEDIA: CD-ROM AND MEGA DRIVE ROM CARTRIDGE

BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY: SEGA MASTER SYSTEM (OPTIONAL)

OPERATING SYSTEM: CUSTOM MEGA-CD BOOT ROM

ULTIMATE GUIDE

CAVEMAN NINJA

IT HAS FINALLY HAPPENED – THOSE CAVEMEN NINJAS JOE & MAC ARE BACK IN A NEW RELEASE FOR MODERN SYSTEMS. WHICH IS ALL THE IMPETUS RETRO GAMER NEEDS TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK AND REVISIT THEIR ORIGINAL JURASSIC LARK

WORDS BY MARTYN CARROLL

» [Arcade] The 'Wam' and 'Womp' prompts give the game a strong comic-book feel. Huzza!

» The Japanese game's title Tatakae Genshijin roughly translates as 'fighting caveman'.

PREHISTORIC SEQUELS

WHAT OUR PRIMITIVE PALS DID NEXT...

CONGO'S CAPER
1992

This 'sequel' has more in common with *Sonic The Hedgehog* than the original, and borrows far too many cues from Sega's series. It also lacks the expected epic boss battles. Not bad, but this isn't really a *Joe & Mac* game.

JOE & MAC 3: LOST IN THE TROPICS
1993

Here we have the proper SNES sequel, which is basically a fun re-run of the original with some lite RPG elements thrown into the mix which benefit the overall game. Visually it's an excellent showcase for the console's 2D capabilities.

JOE & MAC RETURNS
1994

This arcade-exclusive entry changes tack, ditching the scrolling platformer approach in favour of single-screen antics. There are still plenty of pleasing nods to the original, including appearances from a few old bosses – plus a Karnov cameo!

Caveman games should really have their own subgenre. When Ubisoft released the prehistoric spin-off *Far Cry Primal* in 2016, a number of online listicles popped up to remind us of some earlier examples. From *Ugh!* and *Frak!* to *BC Bill* and *Bonk's Adventure*, to the likes of *Chuck Rock* and *Prehistorik*, there are a surprising number of them. And front and centre on most of these lists was *Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja*, Data East's highly entertaining prehistoric-themed platformer.

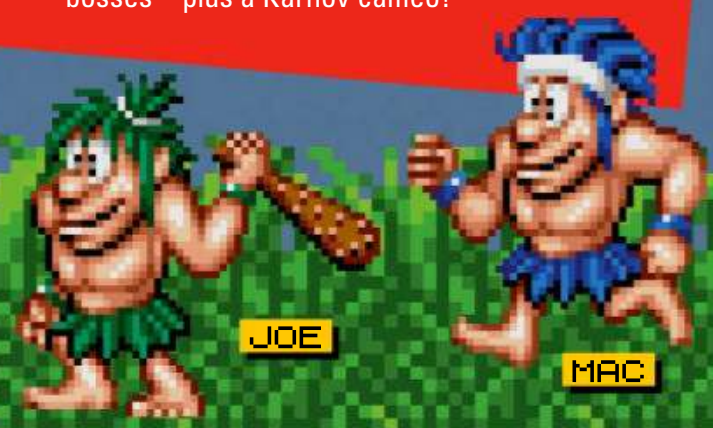
You might also know it simply as *Joe & Mac*, or by its original Japanese moniker *Tatakae Genshijin: Joe & Mac*. Regardless of the title, the game sees our two heroes embarking on a quest to rescue their beloved cavegirls who've been kidnapped by a rival tribe. Along the way they not only face ne'er-do-well Neanderthals and various environmental hazards (fire, water, the usual stuff), but also a bunch of oversized bosses ready to stomp them into the next historical era.

Taking cues from the shoot-'em-up genre, the boss battles are very much the focus of Data East's charming game and it often feels that the actual stages are simply there to string these impressive encounters together. The result is a fairly short game that can be completed in less than 20 minutes. To attract repeat plays, at several points you get to choose between A and B paths which provide alternative routes to the next boss battle. Although it's not stated, the B paths are slightly longer and also a little more challenging (in what's already a fairly tough game).

Another staple borrowed from shooters is charged-up weapons. By holding down fire, you'll wind up your weapon so that it fires further and hits harder. But wind it up too much and you'll lose energy and briefly be exposed to attacks while you recover, so it's a careful balancing act. Talking of weapons, there are six to choose from, with fire, lightning and the stone wheel being particularly potent (and our personal favourites). In two-player mode there's an extra attack where you can pick up your pal and hurl them at enemies like a hirsute bowling ball. This is effective but kinda annoying for the player getting hurled across the screen.

"YOU CAN PICK UP YOUR PAL AND HURL THEM AT ENEMIES LIKE A HIRSUTE BOWLING BALL"

Co-op play also introduces a slightly competitive edge to the game, because only the player who has dealt the most damage to each boss receives



» [Arcade] In co-op games you can grab the other player and throw them at enemies.

STEALTHY CAVEMAN

"MORE THAN 200 SPRITES ARE USED TO BRING BOTH JOE AND MAC TO LIFE"

HELIROCKTER

the rescued cavegirl's kiss (which replenishes their health bar and cuts to a scene showing the 'lucky' player sporting a goofy grin while the 'loser' weeps uncontrollably). Yes, there are certain elements in *Joe & Mac*, specifically around the depiction of women in the game, that are in dubious taste – and even more so when viewed in 2023. Specifically, the opening sequence, which features a 'gag' involving cavegirls getting dragged by their hair, was causing concern as early as 1991 as Data East removed it entirely from the SNES version released outside of Japan, replacing it with a text-based prologue. The contentious scene does still appear in the Mega Drive, PC and (to some extent) Game Boy versions.

The arcade version was released in February 1991 and didn't generate much coverage in the gaming press. *Sinclair User* did review it in April that year, with John Cook calling it "a neat, cute, jumpy-kicky game that will prove mildly diverting for the average vid-fiend" and awarding it 75%. He was most impressed with the graphics which he described as "jolly", but "jolly bloody good" may have been more apt. Running on the same 68000-based hardware that powered Data East's *Two Crude* and *RoboCop 2*, it comes from that era when there was finally enough on-board memory to include a ridiculous number of 2D sprites, resulting in superb cartoon-like animation. For example, more than 200 sprites are used to bring both Joe and Mac to life, showing them walking, running, falling, goofing, attacking and of course dying in a number of comedic ways. The enemies and bosses are also brilliantly animated, exhibiting a variety of states and expressions. Add in the detailed backgrounds that feature several levels of parallax scrolling and you have one fine-looking game.

POWER-UP EGG

BOSS RUSH

HOW TO ADD THE GAME'S GUARDIANS TO THE EXTINCTION LIST

THE TREACHEROUS TYRANNOSAURUS

■ This drowsy dino awakens when you upset its offspring and starts to spit boulders and regurgitated cavemen at you. It also tries to eat you.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Jump to the upper platform and attack its head, while keeping right to avoid its nasty bite. When the platform drops, jump up and keep focussing on its head.

THE LEGENDARY TYRANT TRIFFID

■ Is it a Triffid or is it Audrey II? Either way, it's hungry and will try and lash you with its tendrils. It also sheds seeds which quickly produce baby Triffids.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Stay ducked down to avoid its tendrils, then jump up and fling projectiles at it when they recede. Deal with the small plants as soon as they appear.

THE GRISLY GREEN PTERANODON

■ This winged menace swoops down and tries to slice you with its clawed toes. It also drops eggs which hatch to release tiny replicas of itself.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Destroy the eggs before they hit the ground to prevent them from hatching. Keep to the sides of the screen and attack when it swoops down.

THE NAUGHTY NOTHOSAUR

■ Acting like angry dolphins, and numerous in number, these guys will leap from the water and try to gnaw you as they fly through the air.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: The trick is to stay low and dead centre on the raft. From this safe spot, fire your weapon into the air as they leap overhead. You'll soon send them packing.

THE BEASTLY BRACHIOSAURUS

■ Your biggest foe yet will try and flush you away with jets of water. After taking damage it'll sink down and then rise again, facing the opposite way.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: The brute force way to defeat this beast is to keep jumping and firing at its head. The clever way is to stay beneath its chin and fire upwards. [That is clever - Ed]

HANGING CAVEGIRL

None of the aforementioned home versions could match the arcade's visuals, but the PC and Mega Drive offerings come quite close. The most interesting versions are the SNES, NES and Game Boy ones, as they all address the issue of the original's short stages by padding them out and making them longer. The SNES version takes things even further by adding in several bonus stages, a completely different final boss, and a *Mario*-style overworld map to link it all together.

Despite starting out in the arcades, it was the SNES version that would act as a springboard for the series. A SNES-only sequel followed in 1992 and replaced Joe and Mac with a kid named Congo (there's no co-op mode this time, sadly). This was an in-name-only sequel, as it was released in Japan as *Tatakae Genshijin 2*, yet it has no direct links to the original, beyond it being a 2D platformer set in prehistoric times.

» [Arcade] Riding the waves on dino heads is all in the day's work for Joe and Mac.

CAVEMEN

ATTACKING CAVEMAN

THE MYTHICAL DACENTRURIAN

■ When this armadillo-like creature is not trying to whack you with its tail, it rolls up into a spiky ball and attempts to flatten you. It also fires little balls at you.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: You can damage this dangerous dinosaur while it's rolled up, but it's wiser to wait until it unfurls and then pepper it with powered-up shots. It's tough, but not impossible.

THE TERRITORIAL MAMMOTH

■ This woolly beastie hurls rocks using its trunk. It also charges at you, and will stomp the ground, causing more rocks to fall from the cave's roof.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Stay to the far left of the screen in order to avoid the rocks and its tusks. As it retreats to the right, jump up and hit it square in the chops. Anyone for mammoth steaks?

THE SPIRITUAL TYRANNOSAURUS

■ Spiritual? Looks more skeletal to us. Its primary attack is a quick lunge, and when you hit it, it will break up and then reform. Cavemen also roam around.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Stay beneath the tusk on the left, so you will be protected from its bones when it shatters. Jump its lunge and then attack its head as it draws back.

THE ROGUISH RED TYRANNOSAURUS

■ Similar to the first boss, only it's bigger, angrier and trickier. It spits mini-dinos and large boulders at you, and of course lunges continuously.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Kill the minis, jump the boulders and keep to the left, only venturing out when it retreats (at which point you can then hit its head from below).

THE FABLED SAGILEOCORN

■ The final boss presents a fitting challenge. The Sagileocorn (whatever the hell that is) leaps around the screen, spitting out rocks and little maggoty things at you.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: You need to evade and attack – but rather than attack the boss, aim for the beating heart on the right as this deals it more damage.

CONVERSION CAPERS

WHICH HOME VERSIONS WERE KINGS AMONG CAVEMEN?

SNES

■ Developed by Data East itself, this version expands on the original by increasing the length of the stages and adding new bonus scenes that you unlock by finding keys. This is easily the best home version, playing like a 12-inch remix of the original.

NES

■ An interesting conversion that removes some elements (like the branching paths) but adds several of its own (such as the mid-stage boss battles against a mini-dino). The most obvious change though is that Mac is missing, leaving Joe to club heads on his own.

GAME BOY

■ Like the NES version, this is one-player only and there are no branching paths. The 'raft' stage is also skipped, and the final boss is a cop out. Graphically it's a bit of a mess – but it's not all bad! There's a pretty enjoyable version here, somewhere.

PC

■ The first version to recreate the arcade experience at home, the PC release features all of the stages, weapons, enemies, boss fights – everything. It also looks the part, with similar levels of background detail and parallax scrolling. A top-drawer conversion.

MEGA DRIVE

■ Whereas the SNES version expanded on the coin-op, this one merely aims to replicate it, and doesn't do a bad job of it. The visuals are slightly muted but it plays fine, and all of the arcade content, including the pathways and the bosses, is included.

AMIGA

■ You'd expect the Amiga version to be similar to the PC game, but this is really quite poor. The graphics are ropy and the last two bosses are missing, like the devs just gave up. The joystick controls are terrible too (although you can use a Mega Drive pad).

TYRANT TRIFFID

REINVENTING JOE & MAC

INDUSTRY VETERAN PHILIPPE DESSOLY DISCUSSES HIS AND PIERRE ADANE'S NEW HD TAKE ON THE ORIGINAL GAME

» Programmer Pierre Adane (below) began his gaming career in 1989 with Ocean Software.

» Chief illustrator Philippe Dessoly (above) has worked with Pierre on many games.

Can you begin by telling us a little something about Mr Nutz Studio?
The studio's name is a reference to our first console game, *Mr Nutz*, which we developed for the SNES and ported to several other consoles more than 30 years ago. *Mr Nutz* has a special place in our hearts and a lot of people still talk to us about it. The studio was born from a shared passion for videogame development. We'd wanted to work on new projects for a while so the time felt right for us to create our own studio.

What appealed to you about the original *Joe & Mac* to make you want to revisit it?
For us *Joe & Mac* is an iconic game of this era, so working on this project just felt so natural when the opportunity arose. On a side note, we both love arcade games, being big fans of the cabinets we used to find in the French cafes.

What can you tell us about the Extended mode? Was this added because the original stages are quite short?
We wanted to offer a secondary experience on top of a faithful arcade one. The Extended mode is an additional way of enjoying the game with much longer levels. Enemy behaviours and other elements are also different. It provides players with a new experience as if they were brand-new levels.

Have any other new modes or features been added?
For the time being the Extended mode is the main addition, but we are looking into adding extra features, for free, which may include Training, Score Attack, Speedrun and Boss Rush modes.

The original game includes some humour that, you

» [Switch] The new version features gorgeous cartoon-quality visuals.

could say, hasn't aged very well. How has the team approached these elements when updating the game for modern audiences?
For us *Joe & Mac* is a difficult arcade game that pushes the concept of die and retry, forcing players to learn the levels and enemy patterns by heart to progress. In Eighties arcade games the scenarios were secondary. Like tons of games of this era, the story revolves around saving a princess kidnapped by a monster, but with a lot of humour and irony. Like we did with the remake of *Toki*, our goal with this new version was to offer players the sensations these very hard games offered, like frustration and joy when you finally reach the next level. We wanted to remain as faithful as possible to the original arcade game.

Do you think we're likely to see more of *Joe & Mac* in the future?
For sure, we have a lot of ideas to keep the *Joe & Mac* universe going, so stay tuned.

» [Arcade] The 'Self' weapon lets you throw enraged reflections of yourself at enemies. Odd but effective.

» [Arcade] Some stages scroll vertically, adding much-need variety to the standard side-scrolling fare.

» [ZX Spectrum] Clive '*Saboteur*' Townsend began work on a Speccy version of *Joe & Mac* but the licence fell through and the game was never released.

» [NES] The Nintendo version features bonus (and bloody annoying) battles against a Halticosaurus.

It was released outside of Japan as *Congo's Caper*. Joe and Mac would return to the SNES the following year in *Tatakae Genshijin 3*, which to add an extra layer of confusion, was released as *Joe & Mac 2* in North America and *Joe & Mac 3* in Europe! Either way, the boys were back in a more familiar adventure that saw them tearing through the tropics in search of a magical crown. And in a nice touch, the game featured a small cameo appearance from Congo to help tie the second game into the series.

"DESPITE STARTING OUT IN THE ARCADES, IT WAS THE SNES VERSION THAT WOULD ACT AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR THE SERIES"

1994 was a busy year for the boys as they also returned to the arcades – but something was slightly awry. Rather than the expected platform adventure, the grammatically challenged *Joe & Mac Returns* was a single-screen platformer that had more in common with Toaplan's *Snow Bros* and Data East's own *Tumblepop*. Like those two games, it's best played in co-op.

Joe & Mac Returns would be the last original game in the series, to date at least, but the various entries have appeared on a number of different systems over the years. The original arcade game was included in the 15-game *Data East Arcade Classics* collection, released for the Nintendo Wii in 2010. The arcade game was later released as a standalone digital download for Switch, PlayStation 4 and PC, with *Returns* also released for Switch and PC. The SNES games are now available as part of the Nintendo Switch Online service. Alternatively, all three SNES titles are included in Retro-bit's *Joe & Mac: Ultimate Caveman Collection* multi-game cartridge.

In November 2022 the original game was remade and remastered as *New Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja* for consoles, PC and Mac. Developed by Mr Nutz Studio, see Reinventing Joe & Mac, the new title features redrawn HD visuals, tweaked controls, and a new Extended mode which expands each stage, giving you more to see and smash. It's the perfect way to revisit the king of caveman games.

Golden Axe

ARCADE PERFECT?

» MEGA DRIVE » 1989 » SEGA

Along with *Castle Of Illusion, Thunder Force III* and *Strider,* Sega's *Golden Axe* was one of the main reasons I imported a Mega Drive back in the day. I had read all the reviews in magazines like *Mean Machines* and often watched the game running in the shop window of Densham Computers. I soon convinced myself that Sega's conversion was arcade perfect and therefore an essential purchase. Yes it was certainly expensive at the time, but my twisted reasoning for picking up a copy was that if I had an arcade-perfect version at home I'd no longer have to pay to play it in arcades. That notion was as ridiculous then as it sounds now, but it was certainly enough to convince me at the time and I soon parted with my cash and took my new game home.

My costly purchase didn't disappoint, and while it was quite easy (I had played the game constantly in arcades after all) it still managed to impress me. Even today, Sega's conversion remains extremely close to the arcade original and while you'd never mistake it for the arcade classic, you can see it was a huge leap over the other home versions of the time.

Sega's real trump card however wasn't the accuracy of *Golden Axe*'s aesthetics, but the inclusion of an entire new section that takes place directly after your dramatic battle with Death Adder. Upon rescuing the king it's suggested that an even greater threat lies in the shadows so you set off to find the puppet master pulling Death Adder's strings.

It turns out that said puppet master, Death Bringer, is simply a reskinned Death Adder who has surrounded himself with an army of reskinned enemies. It's admittedly not the most testing of stages, but it remains a nice way of concluding the game and still offers a decent challenge today. ✱

LEVEL 9'S HUGE ADVENTURES

BEST KNOWN FOR TEXT ADVENTURES THROUGHOUT THE EIGHTIES, LEVEL 9 COMPUTING CHANGED DIRECTION AT THE START OF THE NEXT DECADE, CRAFTING A NEW VERSATILE GRAPHICAL GAME ENGINE AND ALSO CHALLENGING PLAYERS TO SOLVE PUZZLES ACROSS TIME ZONES IN A VERY FAMILIAR MAZE

WORDS BY RICHARD HEWISON

» After Level 9, Mike Austin moved away from games development and into business software. Today, he is cofounder and CEO at Fresh Relevance, a marketing hub for online retailers, delivering real-time marketing tactics across email, mobile and the web.

» Darren Anderson has over 30 years of experience in software publishing, working almost exclusively in games development for companies like Domark, Acclaim, Probe, Take 2, Argonaut, Curve, Hotgen and Electric Square.

Level 9 Computing was a family run software developer and publisher which had become text adventure specialists, creating a succession of popular games for a wide variety of home computers in the early Eighties. However, text adventures were one of the few game genres that became less commercial as home computers became more powerful, so in 1988 Level 9's Mike Austin turned his attention to the future of the company. He began laying the groundwork for the system that would become known as HUGE (wHoley Universal Game Engine). "We thought that a very graphical interface was really interesting," explains Mike. "The way we were heading was very much like the way things were being taken forward by Sierra On-Line in America."

Sierra produced point-and-click graphical adventures including *King's Quest*, *Police Quest* and the adult-themed *Leisure Suit Larry* for 16-bit computers, and along with Lucasfilm Games it was changing the adventure game market in a radical way. Mike placed an advert in the summer of 1988, looking for new full-time and freelance staff. The developer's successful recruits included programmer Kerri Cockwell, artist and animator Dicon Peeke and Ken Jarvis, and musician Chris Jenkins who all joined the Austin brothers Mike, Nick, Pete and programmer Mike Bryant. "Creating the new HUGE system took quite a long time, because we were producing something that had to be portable across a number of different platforms," continues Mike. The new system was developed primarily for the Atari ST, Commodore Amiga and the IBM PC, although technically some of the older formats could have been included if there was demand. Like its proprietary text adventure system, HUGE allowed all target platforms to share the same core files for data, graphics and music. Machine-specific files catered for everything else.

After a year or so in development, the HUGE system was finally ready to begin producing a

» [Amiga] Hunting for tigers in one of *Champion Of The Raj*'s entertaining minigames.

» A tantalising glimpse of some of the graphics produced for the unpublished *Grange Murders*.

yield. Level 9 had its first HUGE game design ready, called *Nine Lives*. The game was set in the Twenties and according to Level 9's own description, it was an animated detective adventure that included nine alternative crimes to solve, ranging from the obvious to the very obscure, all set during a family reunion in a large and mysterious country house. With a system ready to go and a game design in hand, it was time to find a publisher. "John Cook was our agent at the time, and he put us in contact with Cinemaware," explains Mike.

As a former Mirrorsoft manager, John was in the perfect position to hook Level 9 up with the US company, as Mirrorsoft was the European distributor for Cinemaware, which just happened to need PC and Atari ST conversions of its recent Amiga hit *It Came From The Desert*. It was the ideal project for Level 9 to deploy HUGE for the first time, and claw back some of the system's development costs before embarking on its own original games. Not only did Level 9 get the conversion job, but Cinemaware also signed *Nine Lives* for the IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST.

Two further HUGE game designs were also in the works, with both requiring some detailed historical research. *Champion Of*

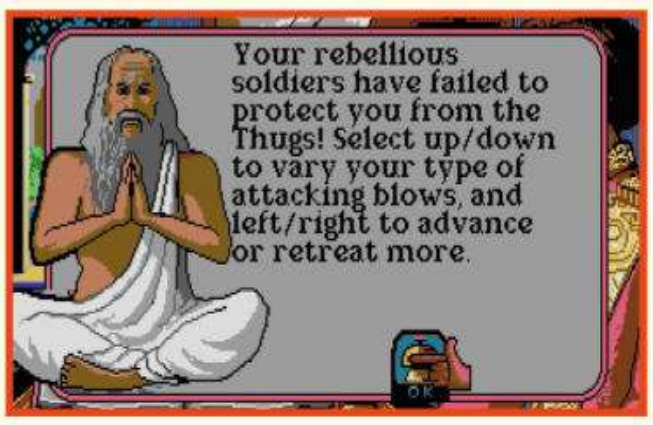
"Hey now! Here's someone who might be a help. Where've you been these past years, Billy? John Tunstall, meet the Kid, an old friend of mine and a good man in a fight."

» [Amiga] Cutscenes moved the plot in between the various arcade sections of *Billy The Kid*.

The Raj concentrated on the events in early 19th century India, during a period where the Mogul Emperors' rule had come to an end, and various different factions were trying to gain the upper hand. The second title was based upon the exploits of the infamous American Wild West outlaw Billy The Kid, also known as William H Bonney, where the player could take on the role of the eponymous Billy, or his friend and ultimate rival, Sheriff Pat Garrett.

> "WE THOUGHT THAT A VERY GRAPHICAL INTERFACE WAS REALLY INTERESTING"
> **MIKE AUSTIN**

Mirrorsoft signed *Champion Of The Raj* for its strategy label PSS, but the choice of publisher for *Billy The Kid* was a bit different, as Mike Austin reveals. "Ocean Software approached us. They were looking to broaden what they did as they were very much best-known for their fast action and arcade conversions at the time."


Your rebellious soldiers have failed to protect you from the Thugs! Select up/down to vary your type of attacking blows, and left/right to advance or retreat more.
OK

At Mirrorsoft, *Champion Of The Raj* was managed by Darren Anderson, and he had semi-regular visits to the Austin's new base of operations in Southampton during the latter stages of the game's development. By the time Darren became involved, the game was not too far from completion, and so his trips were concentrated on finding bugs and trying to get new fixed builds created whilst he ▶

LEVEL 9'S COMPETITORS

WHAT THE HUGE ADVENTURES WERE UP AGAINST

HAMMURABI

Hammurabi was a resource management game written in FOCAL for DEC PDP machines, inspired by a Sixties educational title for IBM terminals, called *The Sumerian Game*. *Hammurabi* was later adapted to run on various platforms, inspiring many similar games including *Yellow River Kingdom* from the BBC micro's *Welcome* tape.

SIERRA ON-LINE

This US studio produced several point-and-click adventures throughout the Eighties and into the early Nineties. Whilst the initial HUGE games were more strategic affairs with some arcade elements, the highly graphical adventure games like Sierra's *King's Quest* series were also on Level 9's radar.

CINEMAWARE

Although Level 9 was producing conversions and new games for Cinemaware, the non-sports titles from Cinemaware like *Rocket Ranger*, *Lords Of The Rising Sun*, *King Of Chicago*, and *Defender Of The Crown* were the type of games that HUGE also aimed to compete with long-term.

REVOLUTION SOFTWARE

In development at the same time as HUGE, Revolution Software's Virtual Theatre system created graphical adventures in a world that continued with or without the player's interaction. *Lure Of The Temptress* was the first game to use it, and HUGE aspired to tread a similar path.

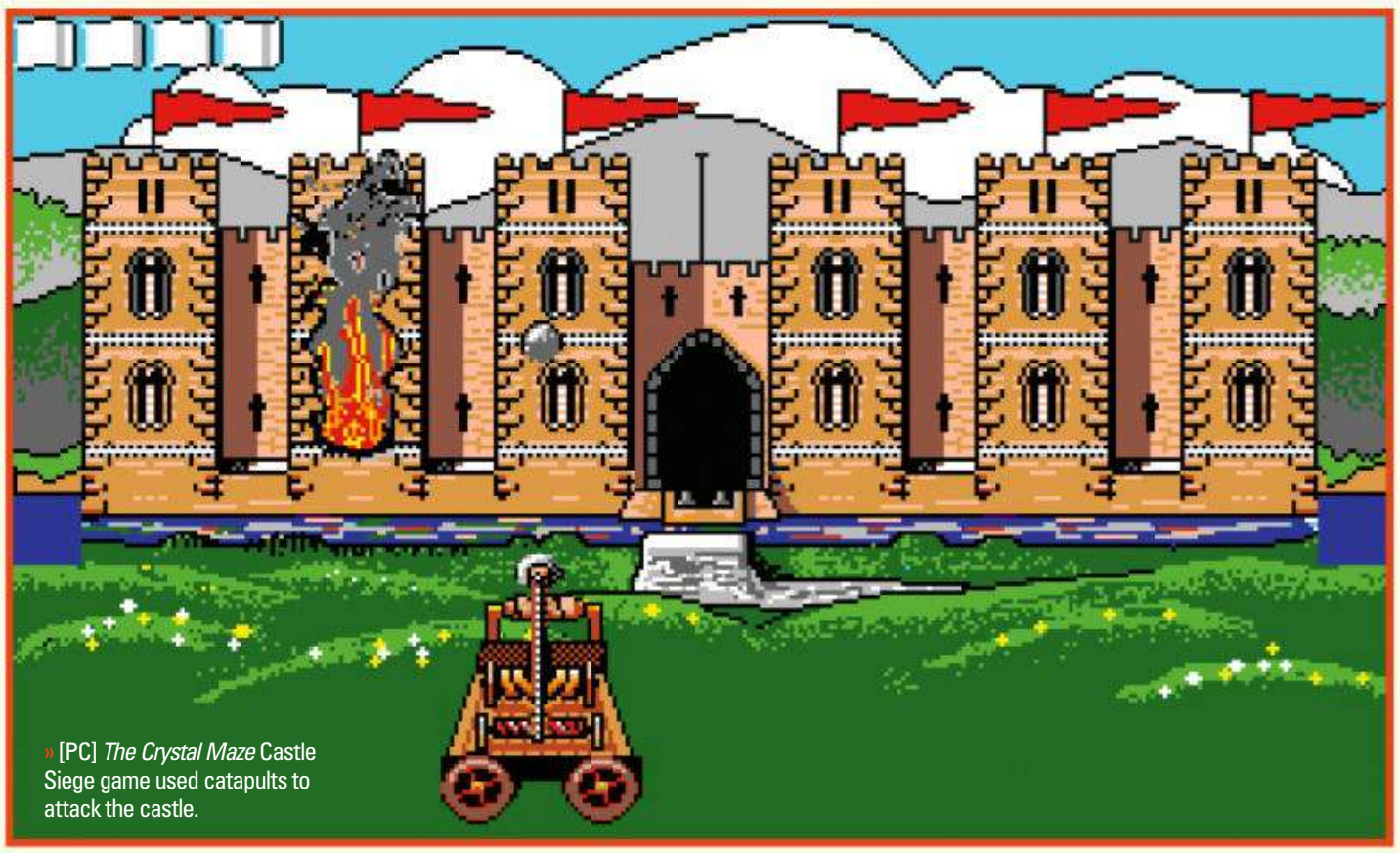
LUCASFILM GAMES

Sierra might have started graphical point-and-click adventures, but Lucasfilm Games stole that particular ball and ran with it. Its iMUSE system, used in games like *Full Throttle*, various *Indiana Jones* projects, *Day Of The Tentacle* and *Sam & Max* significantly raised the bar.

» [PC] *The Crystal Maze* theme-park experiences ran HUGE games in each zone. Image credit: Abandoned, Explorer Youtube.

was on site. "You could say that they were early pioneers of working from home," explains Darren. "They had this huge Edwardian-style house with massive rooms and multiple floors, and the main living room on the ground floor had maybe six desks in it with people working on various projects." The various other projects Darren alluded to were HUGE titles *Billy The Kid* and one that was very unique.

"There was a pair of entrepreneurs who had an idea to build a theme park based upon *The Crystal Maze* TV show," recalls Mike. "The prototype was based in Blackpool in the entertainment complex next to the pleasure beach. They raised the money and built something similar to today's Laser Quest, but far more elaborate, featuring the different time zones from the TV show."



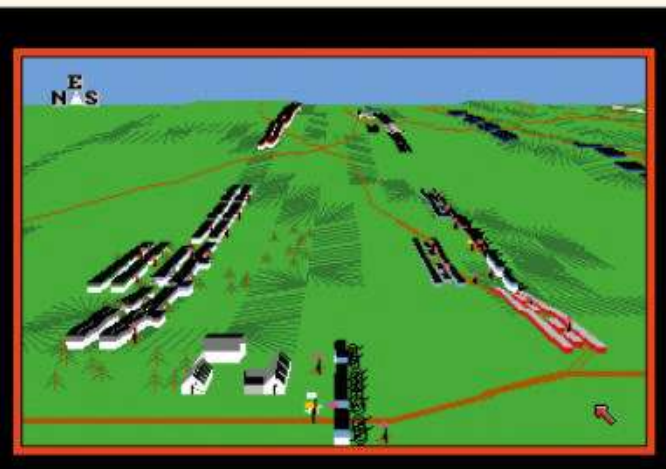
» [PC] *The Crystal Maze* Castle Siege game used catapults to attack the castle.

Several *Crystal Maze* theme parks were set up by Cyberdome Operations Ltd, with Blackpool, Pembrokeshire in Wales, and Southampton among them. Each theme-park experience typically lasted 30-45 minutes and could be played by teams consisting of between two and six players. The décor of each time zone was produced to a very high standard, albeit on a smaller scale to the TV show, but it wouldn't have felt like *The Crystal Maze* without the physical and logical challenges, and this was where Level 9's expertise came in, as Mike goes on to explain. "We produced 20 or so fairly simple games using HUGE, and they were linked to the physical challenges being done, so for example someone would swing across on a rope and hit a button on the wall, and our program would know that button had been pushed. We had a virtual Wizard character who we had digitised and sampled, and they would effectively moderate the game, taking the players through the physical maze via terminal screens found in each time zone."

Image credit: Abandoned Explorer YouTube

CREATING HISTORY

MORE GAMES BASED ON REAL HISTORY



WATERLOO

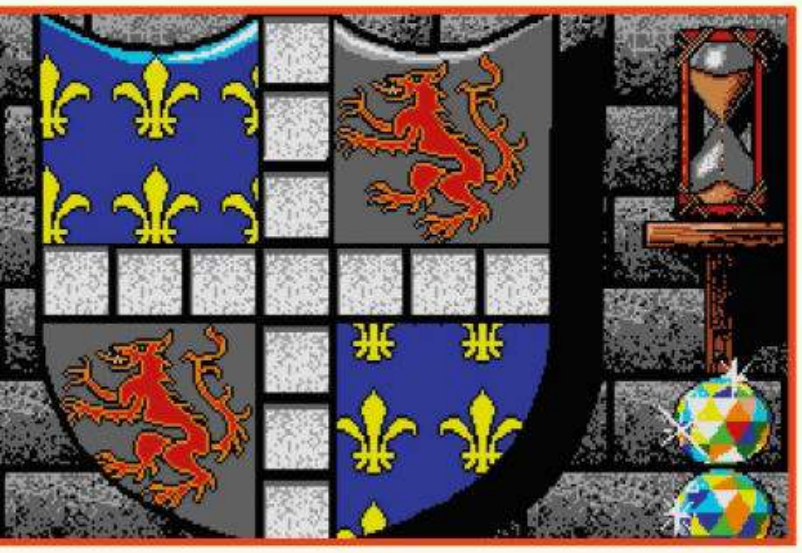
■ Dr Peter Turcan's *Waterloo* gave players the chance to rewrite the outcome of the 1815 clash between Wellington and Napoleon. Using the same turn-based game engine Turcan employed for *Borodino* and subsequent games, the player had ten hours to win the battle.

REACH FOR THE SKIES

■ Rowan Software's *Reach For The Skies* simulator recreated the Battle Of Britain between the RAF and the German Luftwaffe, fought between July-October 1940 over the skies of Southern England. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

CONFLICT: MIDDLE EAST

■ SSI's *Conflict: Middle East* was a 16-bit hexagonal-based wargame set around the 1973 Arab Israeli war and included a fictitious Nineties conflict between Israel and a coalition of Arab states. It was part of a series of similar SSI titles steeped in historical conflicts.



» [PC] Here's a look at *The Crystal Maze*'s Titanic engine room. Image credit: Abandoned Explorer, Youtube.

» [PC] *The Crystal Maze* Tarot game pitched players against a witch predicting their fate.

At the start, the party would be issued with a smart card as they entered the maze and swiping the card at each terminal would trigger the Wizard who would then inform the players what had just happened, or what would happen next. The HUGE games played on the terminals included a *Lunar Lander* clone, a tarot card game, a game featuring trains and many more. Each terminal was a PC running a HUGE-based game with a network driver. "The computer would then select the next game and give the group clues as where to go in the maze to find it," says Mike. "When they arrived, they would swipe their card at the computer terminal there and be told the rules of the game by the Wizard, whether it be a real physical game, or one of our short one-minute computer games. Like the TV series, the faster they completed each game, the more points and the more time they got in the dome at the end."

> "IT WAS A GREAT THING TO BE PART OF, AND IT WAS VERY POPULAR. THE CRYSTAL MAZE THEME PARKS WERE TRULY AMAZING
> **MIKE AUSTIN**

Talking of the dome, the theme-park version contained around 60 buttons that lit up, and if the player hit each button before they switched off again, they were awarded extra points (virtual golden tokens) towards their final score. Unlike the real show, there were no prizes at the end of the theme park, other than achieving the best score.

Working on something a little different from the other HUGE games in development at Level 9 was an experience Mike is obviously very proud of. "It was a great thing to be part of, and it was very popular. *The Crystal Maze* theme parks were truly amazing." After six seasons and three different presenters, *The Crystal Maze* TV series was cancelled by Channel 4 in 1995. The theme parks also eventually ran their course, but they outlasted the original TV series' lifespan by a significant number of years.

By the time Level 9 was fully engaged with *The Crystal Maze* games in late-1990, it had already completed its work for Cinemaware on *It Came From The Desert*. The Atari ST version, primarily created for release in Europe, was finished early the following year, but was seemingly never released either by Cinemaware in the US or by Mirrorsoft in the UK or Europe. However, Level 9 couldn't rest on its laurels. It had the other HUGE games to complete.

"Whenever I visited Level 9, I was put into one of the smaller bedrooms in their house,

ESCAPE FROM COLDITZ

■ This was an adaptation of the board game that was originally published in 1973, which was designed by British Colditz escapee Major P R Reid. An official computer game was developed by Digital Magic in association with board-game licensor Gibson Games in 1991 for the Amiga and Atari ST.

JOAN OF ARC

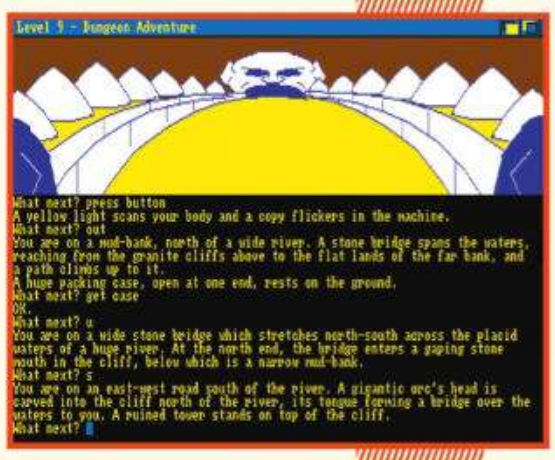
■ It's 15th century France, and a peasant girl is appointed war general by the heir to the French throne, charged to rid the country of the English. 560 years later, US Gold released *Joan Of Arc* on 16-bit systems, clearly inspired by Cinemaware's *Defender Of The Crown*.

LEVEL 9'S HIGHLIGHTS

A 16-BIT TEXT ADVENTURE HERITAGE TO BE PROUD OF

JEWELS OF DARKNESS

■ Level 9's first trilogy compilation for Rainbird Software pulled together *Colossal Adventure*, *Adventure Quest* and *Dungeon Adventure* into one package. The addition of basic location graphics and improvements to the system made *Jewels Of Darkness* an essential purchase for PC, Amiga, or Atari ST owners.


Level 9 - Dungeon Adventure
What next? press button
A yellow light scans your body and a copy flickers in the machine.
What next? out
You are on a mud-bank, north of a wide river. A stone bridge spans the waters, reaching from the granite cliffs above to the flat lands of the far bank, and a path climbs up to it.
A huge packing case, open at one end, rests on the ground.
What next? get case
OK.
What next? u
You are on a wide stone bridge which stretches north-south across the placid waters of a huge river. At the north end, the bridge enters a gaping stone mouth in the cliff, below which is a narrow mud-bank.
What next? s
You are on an east-west road south of the river. A gigantic orc's head is carved into the cliff north of the river, its tongue forming a bridge over the waters to you. A ruined tower stands on top of the cliff.
What next?

SILICON DREAMS

■ A second compilation, but this time a solid science fiction trilogy comprising of *Snowball*, *Return To Eden* and *The Worm In Paradise*. As with *Jewels Of Darkness*, Silicon Dreams' four-colour simplistic location graphics weren't to everyone's taste, but you couldn't fault the challenges posed in the games.

What now? DIG UP
You dig a passage leading upwards.
What now? D
The geiger counter sounds a warning shriek. Do you want to wait until it is safer? Y
You wait for several hours, until the geiger counter is ticking more slowly.
You are amidst the charred remains of a spacecraft on a bleak, burnt plain.
There are no signs of life. Exits are north, east, south, west and down.
What now?

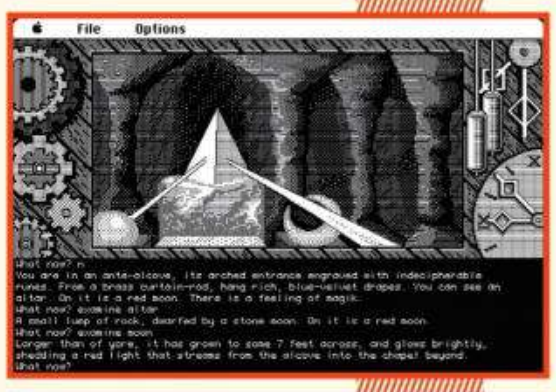
THE GNOME RANGER SERIES

■ There aren't many humorous text adventures, so the two *Gnome Ranger* games featuring Ingrid Bottomlow were a bit of a risk for Level 9. Playing a female who happened to be a gnome definitely went against the gnormal text adventure tropes of the day.

> E
Ingrid went east and was on the track leading down to Dusty Halfyard's mill. It was a quite sheltered spot here, away from the wind that had been blowing up along the lane. Ingrid could see a gnotice. Oddly enough, the gnotice was positioned exactly at Ingrid's eye-level. It read "Gno Ingrids", which made her laugh at Uncle Dusty's bad spelling and correct it to "Gno Ingress".
A loud clucking sounded to the east.
Flopsy entered from the west.

TIME & MAGIC

■ *Red Moon* and *The Price Of Magik* dared to be different, introducing RPG-style stats including hit points, a sanity rating, and a world where iron inhibited magic spells. Both games were bundled with *Lords Of Time* into the compilation *Time & Magik*, complete with improved location graphics.

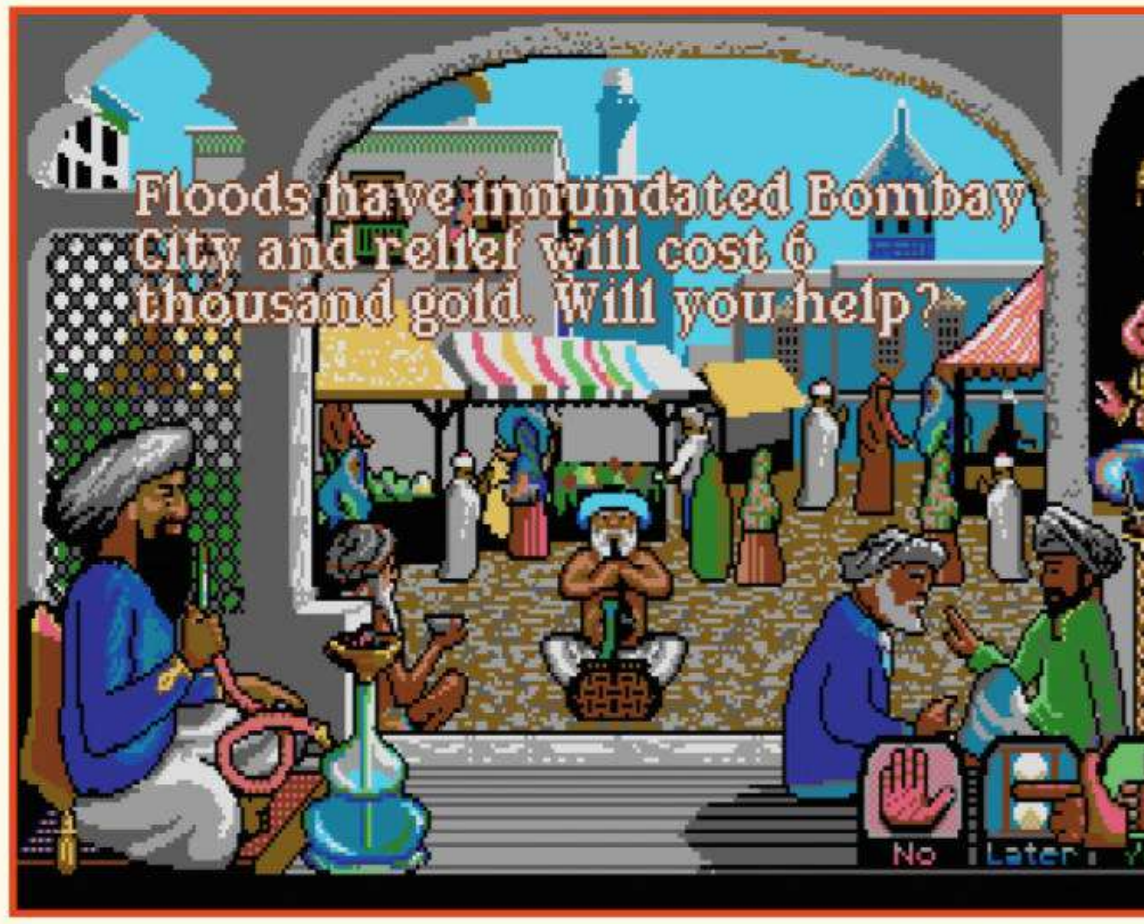

File
Options
What now? n
You are in an ante-alcove, its arched entrance engraved with indecipherable runes. From a brass curtain-rod, hang rich, blue-velvet drapes. You can see an altar. On it is a red moon. There is a feeling of magic.
What now? examine altar
A small lump of rock, dwarfed by a stone moon. On it is a red moon.
What now? examine moon
Larger than of yore, it has grown to some 7 feet across, and glows brightly, shedding a red light that streams from the alcove into the chapel beyond.
What now?

LANCELOT

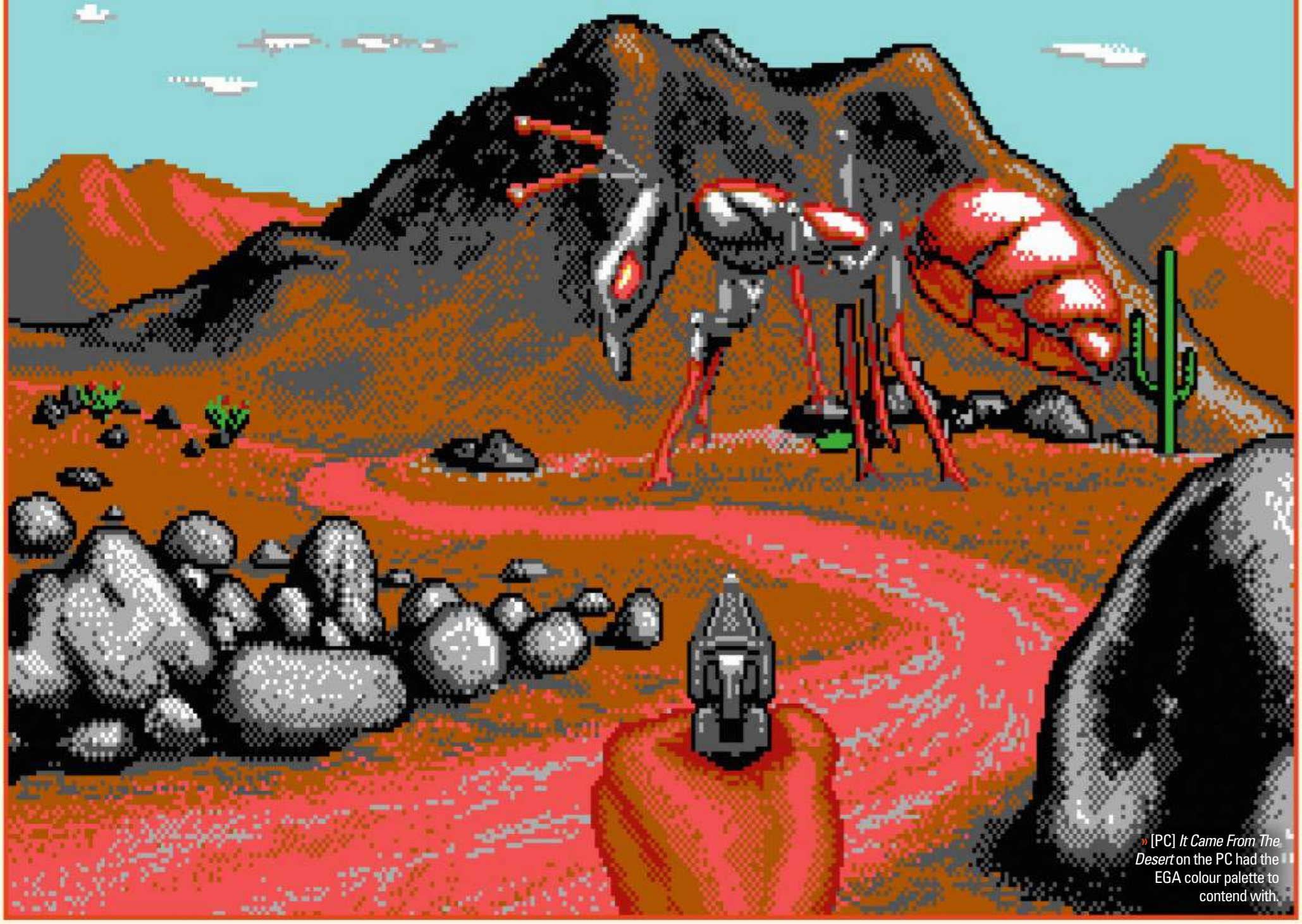
■ Subject research was very important to Level 9, and this was definitely the case with the design behind *Lancelot*, a text adventure split into three parts which recounted the myth of King Arthur, Excalibur, Sir Lancelot and the other Knights Of The Round table.

> S
Sir Lancelot went south and was in the great hall of the Round Table. It was a high-ceilinged room hung about with bright tapestries, and so large was it that one hundred and fifty knights could be seated. Fragrant rushes covered the floor; a trampled pathway along the east wall showed where many people had gushed past the table. Exits led north and south through a door. Lancelot could see some sieges and a Round Table.

» [PC] Racing elephants in India was a fun arcade diversion from the strategy found in *Champion Of The Raj*.



» [PC] Like other *Hammurabi*-style games, floods often caused problems for the player's resource management.



» [PC] *It Came From The Desert* on the PC had the EGA colour palette to contend with.

which did actually have a bed, with a little desk next to it and I did all of the testing on a PC or Amiga," says Darren Anderson. "I found it really interesting because I was a massive *Defender Of The Crown* fan, and *Champion Of The Raj* was an obvious attempt to do a similar type of game."

Billy The Kid and *Champion Of The Raj* across all three formats were completed over the following four or five months. At this point, Level 9 should have been in a strong position with three major projects done and dusted, a fourth game almost finished, and the theme-park project on the go. However, 1991 turned out to be a boom or bust year. Mirrorsoft published *Champion Of The Raj* in mid-1991 for the Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, and IBM PC to lukewarm reviews. It was a nicely presented strategy title, well-researched and containing enough strategy and resource management to satisfy most fans of the genre, but the HUGE system struggled at a technical level on some platforms.

"For those systems that had to play from floppy disk, it was ultra-difficult to fit everything into the computer's memory," says Mike. "We had some degree of paging, but that didn't work too well. We always encouraged people to copy the files onto hard disk and play it from there, but that wasn't always possible back then."

Another problem arose with the busier arcade-style sections becoming quite sluggish on the lower specification Atari ST and Amiga computers. In comparison, the HUGE games ran and played quite nicely on a decently equipped PC. Level 9 was then dealt a major blow when Ocean Software abandoned plans to publish *Billy The Kid*, despite advertising the game, commissioning multiple language versions and producing boxed preview copies. In hindsight, Ocean was an odd publishing partner for the game, but to not release a finished product was a very odd call to make, and the publisher kept the Austins in the dark about the reasons. "Ocean never told us why they didn't want to finalise the game,' says Mike. "It may have been because they simply didn't like it or didn't think it fitted into their product range."

> "WE COULDN'T DISENTANGLE THE RIGHTS TO GRANGE MURDERS FROM THE WRECKAGE OF CINEMAWARE
> **MIKE AUSTIN**

Unfortunately, the real killer blow came from across the Atlantic Ocean, rather than from Ocean Software. As summer 1991 approached, Cinemaware finally succumbed to financial pressures that had been mounting over the past year or so. Overly ambitious efforts to move into console and CD-ROM development took its toll, and the company went under. Level 9 hadn't been paid by Cinemaware for completion of the *It Came From The Desert* conversions, or for the almost-finished *Nine Lives*, which had been renamed *Grange Murders*. "We couldn't disentangle the rights to *Grange Murders* from the wreckage of Cinemaware," says Mike, which meant all the hard work that had gone into the game would never be rewarded.

After the failure to get *Billy The Kid* published and Cinemaware's collapse, the Austins had to face up to the reality that they could no longer keep paying the bills. They had no choice but to lay everyone off and close the company down in the autumn of 1991. With Ocean not publishing *Billy The Kid*, Cinemaware going bust and Mirrorsoft also collapsing after being forced into administration at the end of the year, it was that perfect storm which overwhelmed the Austins in the end.

Had Cinemaware endured, then there's little doubt that Level 9 and its HUGE games would have evolved along with the advances in PC gaming in the early Nineties. The hardest challenge for the Austins would have been to remain staunchly independent, as development costs soared with the arrival of CD-ROM and console gaming. As it is, Level 9 Computing lasted 11 years from 1981-1991, but its legacy remains fondly remembered to this day.

The last word has to go to Mike Austin, who offers a chink of light for anyone wishing to learn more about the potential that HUGE had to offer. "Over the past year or two I've been trying to read a load of old floppy disks. I've got a few thousand to go through, but the plan is to eventually put rescued files up onto github or something similar as open source."

Peripheral Vision

Jogcon fact

■ Holding the Mode button as you boot the PlayStation enables a NeGcon compatibility mode, allowing the Jogcon dial to substitute for the NeGcon in games which support it.

ESSENTIAL GAME

RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

When a piece of hardware is specifically designed for a particular game, that's probably the one to try it with, and that proves to be the case here. The actual driving experience changes quite a bit, particularly when it comes to controlling the drifts that are so crucial to the *Ridge Racer* series, so don't expect a smooth transition from a traditional pad. The Jogcon wasn't even available separately in Europe, so if you're buying a boxed one today, it'll probably come with the game unless you've opted for a Japanese pad.

Jogcon

» PLATFORM: PlayStation **» YEAR:** 1999
» COST: £59.99 (launch, with *Ridge Racer Type 4*), £40+ (today, boxed), £25+ (today, unboxed)

Not content with having introduced one pad for racing fans, the twisting NeGcon, Namco decided to introduce another with the release of *Ridge Racer Type 4*. The Jogcon's key feature is the large dial in the centre of the controller, which is used for analogue steering in compatible games. What isn't apparent at first sight is the force feedback function, which allows the dial to pull against you and react to on-screen events. Compatible games typically move regular functions to the shoulder buttons, in order to free your thumbs for steering duties.

Although there's a fun novelty to the additional physical feedback that the Jogcon offers, it doesn't necessarily improve your performance on the track. Worse still, as it was a fairly late addition to the PlayStation's line of peripherals, relatively few games support its unique force feedback steering dial properly – those that do include *V-Rally 2*, *Breakout* and *Ridge Racer V* for PS2. It does at least function as a regular digital controller if you're in a pinch.

SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

SO YOU WANT TO COLLECT...

ATARI LYNX GAMES

Atari's handheld may have ultimately been trounced by the Game Boy, but it has still managed to build a loyal following – here's a selection of key games you should be looking out for

Words by Darran Jones

» [Atari Lynx] It feels a little sedate nowadays, but this felt like '*After Burner* in your hands' in 1989.

CHEAP THRILLS

BLUE LIGHTNING

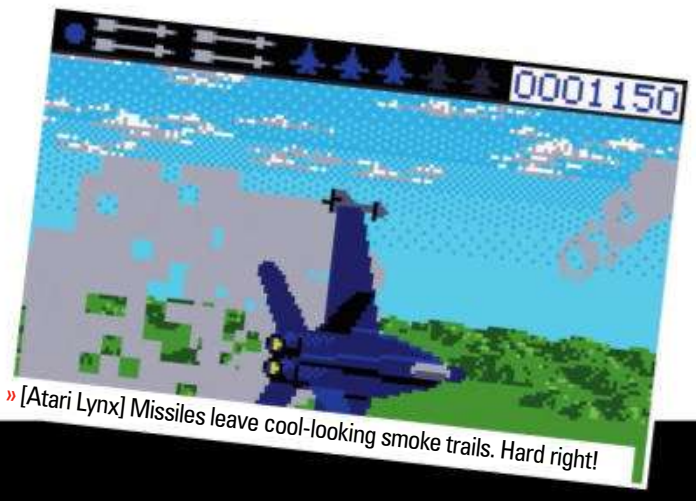
EXPECT TO PAY £38+ USA

EXPECT TO PAY £30+ EUROPE

DEVELOPER:	EPYX
RELEASE:	1989

■ Epyx's military-themed shoot-'em-up was the perfect launch game for the Lynx as it instantly highlighted all the elements that made Atari's handheld so desirable at launch. It genuinely felt like having *After Burner* in the palm of your hands back in 1989 and while that impact has diminished somewhat in the last 30-odd years, Epyx's game remains an impressive technical achievement. Packed with action and featuring a fair amount of variety, *Blue Lightning* remains a great blaster and an essential Lynx purchase, even if it isn't as fast as we remember it.

Fortunately, if you fancy adding *Blue Lightning* to your Lynx collection today it can be done with very little cost due to complete versions rarely selling above £35. Loose carts are naturally even cheaper and we've seen them go for as little as £5, though £15 is more typical. It's a similar story in the US with carts starting at £9 and complete copies rarely passing £40.



» [Atari Lynx] Missiles leave cool-looking smoke trails. Hard right!

» We'd love to see Lynx arcade conversions at some point, but licensing makes it unlikely.

A PORTABLE ALTERNATIVE

Why the Evercade is the perfect Lynx solution

■ One of the easiest ways to currently experience Atari's Lynx is via the Evercade, Evercade EXP and Evercade VS. Blaze's systems support two Lynx-themed cartridges and between them they're a great way to experience the handheld. While it is annoying that none of the Lynx's superb arcade conversions are included, both cartridges do a good job of showcasing the Lynx's limited library. *Atari Lynx Collection 1* features 17 games, including *Awesome Golf*, *Super Skweek*, *Dracula: The Undead* and *CyberVirus*, while *Atari Lynx Collection 2* has a smaller number of games, but the quality is far higher. In addition to *Blue Lightning* it also includes *California Games*, *Electrocop*, *Checkered Flag*, *Chip's Challenge*, *Gates Of Zendocon*, *Todd's Adventures In Slime World* and *Zarlor Mercenary*. Both titles are excellent value for money at £18.99 and represent one of the easiest ways to play several of the games covered in this

» [Atari Lynx] The Lynx had many great arcade conversions, but *STUN Runner* was the best.

TRULY STUNNING

STUN RUNNER

EXPECT TO PAY £28+ USA

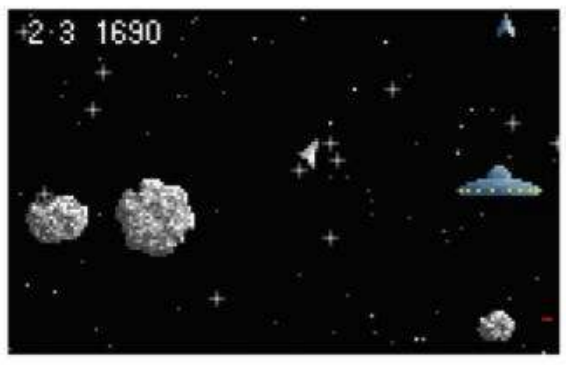
EXPECT TO PAY £30+ EUROPE

DEVELOPER:	D SCOTT WILLIAMSON
RELEASE:	1991

■ D Scott Williamson did some sensational work on the Atari Lynx, coding the likes of *RoadBlasters* and *Toki*, along with this, arguably his crowning achievement on the handheld. It's a truly astounding conversion of the arcade original and on its release it was completely untouchable as a home port. Newer compilations mean it's now possible to experience the arcade original in the comfort of your own home, but even today *STUN Runner* holds up well, making it one of the crown jewels of Atari's system.

Luckily, its popularity hasn't caused a price spike yet with even sealed copies going no higher than £30, both in the US and Europe. Like many of the games featured here it's never had a re-release of any sort, so grab it at a cheap price while you still can.

» [Atari Lynx] *Missile Command* on Lynx is fun but its controls means it's tougher than the arcade original.



» [Atari Lynx] If the rising price is putting you off there's always the excellent Evercade cart to consider.

WALLET BUSTER

SUPER ASTEROIDS & MISSILE COMMAND

EXPECT TO PAY £110+ USA

EXPECT TO PAY £70+ EUROPE

DEVELOPER:	STEVE MARSCHNER
RELEASE:	1995

■ This pack of classic games has risen in price considerably in recent years, making its inclusion on *Atari Lynx Collection 1* a far cheaper alternative. Steve Marschner is the programmer behind both games and he's crafted a solid pair of blasters that do a decent job of capturing the essence of the arcade classics. *Super Asteroids* is the weakest of the pair, but looks decent enough and still offers a challenge on later stages. *Missile Command* is far better and while its controls aren't the best, including a shop adds some much-needed strategy while playing. Price wise, loose carts start at £50, while complete copies can hit £110, though we've seen it sell as low as £70. Sealed versions can hit as much as £170 on both sides of the Atlantic.

PACK-IN PERFECTION

CALIFORNIA GAMES

DEVELOPER:	EPYX
RELEASE:	1989

■ There are several variants of *California Games* to look out for – one with a rubbish flat cartridge, one with a slightly more accessible ridged cartridge, and one with the curved lip that would become standardised for all later Lynx games. As you'd expect the later curved lip variant is the most popular and as a result tends to fetch the highest price, with cart prices ranging from £7 to £25. Regardless of which version you do end up with you'll discover a cracking game. Sure it's missing two events – roller-skating and flying disc, if you're interested – but the four that did make it are great representations, and in the case of the half-pipe event, even manage to throw in some superb scaling effects. Boxed versions of the game are quite expensive, with prices starting at £34.

EXPECT TO PAY £34+ EUROPE

EXPECT TO PAY £52+ USA

» [Atari Lynx] Darran used to be insane at surfing in *California Games*, but he did play it for many lunchtimes when **Retro Gamer** first launched.

WHICH VERSION?

How to tell the different cart variants apart

■ If you fancy buying games that are virtually impossible to extract from your Lynx, you're in luck – there aren't too many to find. The complete range of Lynx games using a flat cartridge are *Blue Lightning*, *California Games*, *Chip's Challenge*, *Electrocop* and *Gates Of Zendocon*. You can spot them online thanks to the 12 tiny dimples at the top of the cart and an ever-so-thin ridge. If you fancy a complete collection of ridged carts, you'll find them to be exactly the same set of games, but with the inclusion of *Gauntlet: The Third Encounter*. The easiest way to spot these versions in photos is by the additional eight small holes found on the front of each cartridge. Getting a full set is an appealing proposition for hardcore collectors.

» The three types of official Lynx carts: flat, ridged and lipped. Special thanks to John Buell for the photo.

Peripheral power

The Lynx has a number of interesting peripherals to collect, ranging from travel cases to official battery packs, sun visors and even a cigarette charger.

Pin badge fun

If you fancy a real challenge, look out for the pin badges Atari France released. There are 34 game-based badges based on titles like *Shanghai* and the unreleased *Vindicators*.

Homebrew delights

There are some essential homebrew releases you should consider adding to your collection, including the excellent *Alpine Games* and *Asteroids Chasers*.

Rare prototypes

Numerous rare prototypes exist on Lynx, including *Alien Vs Predator* and *Eye Of The Beholder*. Be warned, you'll likely pay a hefty premium for them.

VERTICAL QUEST

GAUNTLET: THE THIRD ENCOUNTER

EXPECT TO PAY £25+ EUROPE

EXPECT TO PAY £23+ USA

DEVELOPER: EPYX
RELEASE: 1990

Originally known as *Time Quests And Treasure Chests*, Epyx's game switched to the more familiar *Gauntlet* when Atari published the Lynx. The front cover is quite misleading as only two of the iconic heroes feature, with the Elf and Warrior being completely absent. The Valkyrie and Wizard are instead joined by six new characters, an Android, Gunfighter, Nerd, Pirate, Punkrocker and Samurai, and as you'd expect, they all have their own strengths and weaknesses. It's a fun game and one of only a handful of published titles to use the Lynx's vertical orientation. It's also starting to climb in price with sealed copies reaching as much as £70. £23-£30 is more usual for boxed copies though.

» [Atari Lynx] You'll drop all your goodies upon death, leaving your mates to freely grab them.

VERTICAL FUN

Two more Lynx games that changed orientation

Klax

Klax was ported to countless home systems, but this version remains one of our favourites. It's a truly memorable adaptation of the hit coin-op with great visuals, all the frantic pace of the original and a silly amount of digitised speech. It even features a two-player mode via the ComLynx Cable. Carts start from a tenner, so grab yourself a bargain.

Raiden

This is one of several unpublished Lynx games that was picked up and published by Songbird Productions. It's a decent, albeit chunky-looking adaptation of the popular coin-op and arguably one of the best shmups on the system. Its late release means this now costs a pretty penny, so be prepared to dig deep on the occasions it does show up to buy.

ROBOT RON?

ROBOTRON: 2084

EXPECT TO PAY £20+ EUROPE

EXPECT TO PAY £19+ USA

DEVELOPER: SHADOWSOFT
RELEASE: 1991

Although this conversion runs a little slower than the arcade game and features a somewhat clunkier control scheme, it's still a solid representation of the hit Williams coin-op. Unlike the twin-stick controls of the arcade game, Shadowsoft's version has your hero automatically firing at all times, while the A and B buttons rotate his line of fire. It's a little inelegant, but even with this compromise the shooting remains satisfying, and just like *Joust*, this is another entertaining Lynx conversion by Shadowsoft. Luckily, many don't seem to have cottoned on to how much fun *Robotron: 2084* is on Atari's handheld, and it's still quite cheap to buy with prices for complete copies starting at £19. It's slightly cheaper in the US, but watch out for those hidden import charges.

» [Atari Lynx] Make sure you save as many humans as possible as they boost your score significantly.

» [Atari Lynx] It doesn't use twin-stick controls, but Shadowsoft's firing system is still pretty good.

PUZZLE BLISS

SHANGHAI

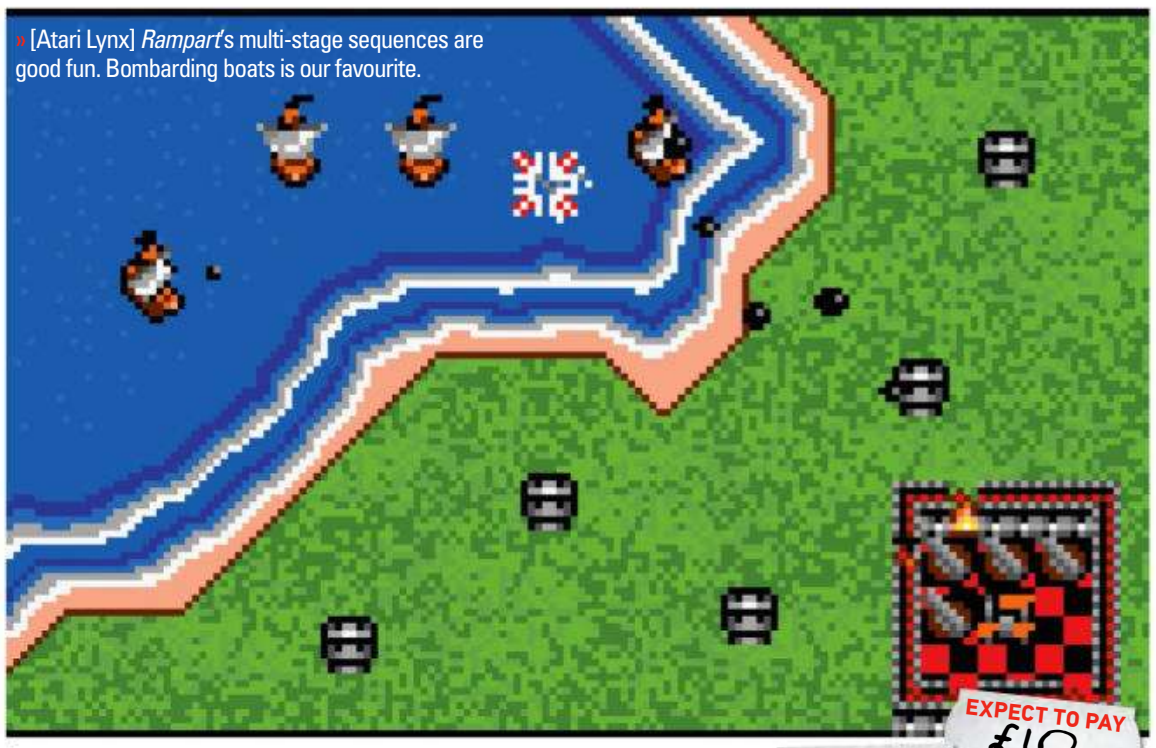
EXPECT TO PAY £20+ EUROPE

EXPECT TO PAY £14+ USA

DEVELOPER: ERIC GINNER/JEROME STRACH
RELEASE: 1990

With the likes of *Chip's Challenge* and *Ishido: The Way Of Stones* easily available on Blaze's Evercade cartridges, we thought we'd highlight this relaxing puzzler instead. The concept behind *Shanghai* couldn't be simpler – you just remove matching tiles until none are left or no matching pairs are accessible to take away. Levels consist of different tile configurations, with higher-stacked shapes being much harder to clear as you may inadvertently hide a needed tile, meaning completion is impossible. While it's mechanically very simple, *Shanghai* is quite an absorbing game and we'd typically run our batteries down playing it. Fortunately, cartridges are relatively cheap to obtain nowadays, with most starting at £7. Complete copies rarely sell for more than £30, so it's not too late to add this charming little puzzler to your growing collection.

» [Atari Lynx] Tiles slide off to the sides of the screen when they're matched. It's a neat effect.



» [Atari Lynx] *Rampart*'s multi-stage sequences are good fun. Bombarding boats is our favourite.

EXPECT TO PAY £10+ USA

EXPECT TO PAY £14+ EUROPE

TACTICAL DEFENCE

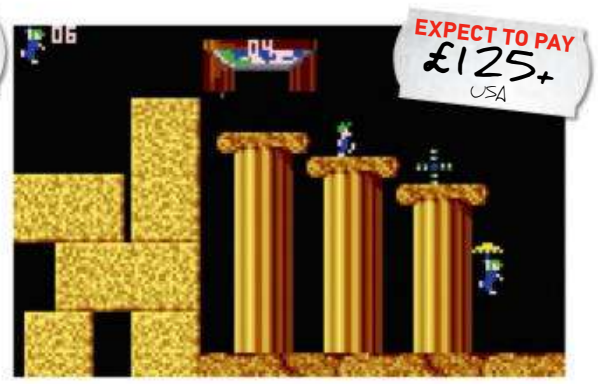
RAMPART

DEVELOPER: ERIC GINNER/JEROME STRACH
RELEASE: 1992

■ Atari's handheld was home to a number of slick arcade conversions, many of which have never been re-released, making them quite desirable for fans of the system. *Rampart* is one of our favourites and while it only caters for two-players (the arcade original managed three) it's still frantic fun, even when playing on your own. It's a clever mix of tactics and strategy as you see off your rival while trying to rebuild your battered castle. Fortunately, you won't have to pay much to enjoy *Rampart* as complete versions of the game shouldn't set you back more than £23. £15 seems a more common price, while loose carts can start as low as a fiver. You'll get an even better deal if you're buying in the US as factory-sealed copies can start from £10.

EXPECT TO PAY £115+ EUROPE

» [Atari Lynx] If you're feeling mean you can blow all these cute critters up.



EXPECT TO PAY £125+ USA

» [Atari Lynx] Your little lemmings float to safety after you equip them with umbrellas. How thoughtful.

LET'S SPEND!

LEMMINGS

DEVELOPER: BRIAN WATSON
RELEASE: 1993

■ The Lemmings may well say "Let's go!" at the start of every level, but you'll be adding "to the bank" if you want to add this excellent Lynx game to your collection. A combination of a late release and high acclaim has seen this impressive conversion rise in price in recent years and it's quickly becoming one of the pricier Lynx games to own. While cartridge prices range from £65 to £100, it's the complete editions that will cause your wallet to blush. One of the most recent copies sold online for £154 and that didn't include the £16 shipping charge. You may have better luck using a Facebook group or something similar if you really want to source this highly desirable game.

SUPER EXPENSIVE?

SUPER OFF ROAD

EXPECT TO PAY £50+ USA/EUROPE

DEVELOPER: TELEGAMES
RELEASE: 1993

■ If you're after the later Telegames releases you're much better going straight to its website, rather than eBay. Take *Super Off Road* for example. We've seen copies sell on eBay for as much as £225, despite the fact it's still readily available from Telegames for £49.99. Of course, even £50 may be a tad too much for you, but if you are prepared to take the plunge you'll find an okay conversion of the arcade original, although the handling and turning of your vehicles can make it needlessly hard. It certainly looks the part, even with the visuals greatly scaled down to fit the Lynx's small screen.

» [Atari Lynx] Weak handling and poor cornering means it's easy to get stuck.

» [Atari Lynx] It's not the greatest of conversions, but it's rapidly rising in price so collectors may want to act now. Find it at telegames.co.uk

WHO NEEDS EBAY?

Two other Telegames releases to buy direct

Double Dragon

Despite its zoomed-in playing area, this conversion is extremely popular with Lynx owners, most likely due to a lack of similar games on the system. *Ninja Gaiden* is arguably the better arcade conversion, but if you love your twin dragons you're better off seeking out a new copy from Telegames directly for £55.

Desert Strike

This port of the hit Mega Drive game is often overlooked, which is a shame as it's a cracking conversion that's crammed with content. Granted it's a little tough to control at times and the smaller playing area can work against it, but this remains very impressive. Just be aware that it's not cheap, landing at £59.99.

Fighting Vipers 2

DEFANGED BY TIME

» DREAMCAST » 2001 » SEGA/SCARAB

A little while ago, I saw a suggestion on Twitter that *Fighting Vipers 2* had been undeservedly forgotten because it never came out in the USA, and the American retro-gaming narrative tends to be dominant online. I can see that line of thinking, because taken on its own terms the game is great fun. The hard-rock soundtrack and outlandish characters suggest that it's less stuffy than its sibling *Virtua Fighter*, and the gameplay confirms that with ridiculous launcher moves and mid-air recoveries. But there's plenty of technique to the fast-paced fighting, including an armour system, a useful parry move and even Super KO attacks that win two rounds instead of one.

The lack of recognition is easier to explain with a bit of context, though. For a start, *Fighting Vipers 2* launched into Japanese arcades in the spring of 1998 and was only moderately popular. It couldn't keep pace with the far older *Tekken 3*, and fell out of favour after a few months due to stiff competition from new launches such as *Soulcalibur*, *Street Fighter Alpha 3* and *The King Of Fighters '98*. It never received an international launch as the original game hadn't fared well, so it's easy to see why Sega would prioritise bigger games for Dreamcast conversions.

Fighting Vipers 2 would likely have fared pretty well had it hit the Dreamcast in 1999, but it received middling review scores when it arrived in 2001. The console wasn't short of great fighting games by then and the relative lack of additions to the home version hardly helped. Even if 2D fighters are to be ignored, it didn't have the single-player content of *Soulcalibur* or *Dead Or Alive 2*'s spectacular multi-level arenas, and both games eclipsed it visually. *Fighting Vipers 2* has great core combat and we'd advise fighting game fans not to overlook it, but its low profile has nothing to do with regional bias – just poor timing and stiff competition.

PRESS START BUTTON
4
RAXEL

>> Evercade fans rejoice! We've got our definitive review of the Evercade EXP and a look at the excellent Toaplan collection. We also playthrough a second collection of Neo Geo Pocket Color games and discover that dodos are alive and well on the Switch

» We love the EXP's slick presentation. We also love its cool extras like secret games, showing your play time and the ability to limit credits.

Evercade EXP

GOOD THINGS REALLY DO COME IN THREES

INFORMATION

- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £129.99
- **PUBLISHER:** BLAZE ENTERTAINMENT
- **DEVELOPER:** BLAZE ENTERTAINMENT
- **BUY IT FROM:** FUNSTOCK.CO.UK

» [Evercade] Feeling masochistic? Competition Mode lets you tackle games without using in-game saves and save states (a small trophy shows it's on).

When we first heard news of the Evercade EXP it felt like it was coming too soon. The Evercade VS had only been on sale for a few months and the original Evercade was only a couple of years old. Did we really need a third machine? The answer is a resounding yes, and while Blaze's new console is certainly a little rough around the edges, it is a suitably significant upgrade over the original 2020 handheld.

Aside from its new Tate mode, the most obvious difference between the original Evercade handheld and the new EXP is the big gulf in price – £129.99 versus £59.99. So what do you get for this extra cash? Quite a bit as it turns out, including a copy of *Irem Arcade 1* (see Irem: Hit Or Miss?). The machine itself looks lovely, with well-designed responsive buttons, another great d-pad and that all-important Tate-mode button which rotates the screen 90 degrees. The packaging is rather neat and it comes with a manual for the included Capcom games, as well as a USB-C charging cable.

BRIEF HISTORY

» Blaze Entertainment's Evercade made its debut in 2020 and instantly found an audience thanks to its low cost and the collectible nature of its cartridges. The Evercade VS arrived in 2021 and was designed for playing on a TV and supported multiplayer games. The EXP is the latest addition to the Evercade family.

» [Evercade] The non-Tate Capcom games are *1944: The Loop Master, Bionic Commando, Breath Of Fire, Captain Commando, Final Fight, Forgotten Worlds, Ghouls 'N Ghosts, Mega Man, Mega Man 2, Mega Man X, Street Fighter II Hyper Fighting* and *Strider.*

» [Evercade] We've played *Strider* a lot, so this glitchy cutscene instantly stood out.

PICKS OF THE MONTH

DARRAN

Evercade: Toaplan Arcade 1

I've had a great time with this. The emulation is superb and I've absolutely hammered *Alcon*, *Snow Bros* and *Flying Shark*.

NICK

Donut Dodo

A couple of goes on this each night has got me through the month. The only trouble has been ensuring a couple doesn't become a dozen.

» [Evercade] Games like *Captain Commando* and *Final Fight* are fun, but they'd be more fun on the VS.

» [Evercade] The cartridge icon takes you to the inserted cart, while the EXP icon takes you to the built-in games. The cog icon is for options.

» [Evercade] The display options are solid, with scanlines looking better on the EXP than they do on an actual TV screen.

IREM – HIT OR MISS?

▼ HOW DOES THE INCLUDED CART FARE?

Blaze's first Irem pack feels a little stingy on first look with only six games included. There's some real quality here though, with the crown jewel being *In The Hunt*. It's a tremendously satisfying (if rather difficult) shoot-'em-up that is now exceptionally pricey to own, so to get a great version of it with five other games is amazing value for money. *R-Type*'s quality needs no introduction, while *Moon Patrol* is equally entertaining. *10-Yard Fight* is a lot better than we remember, while *Mr Heli* (sorry, *Battle Chopper*) is as quirky and as tough as ever. That just leaves *Lightning Swords*, a rather obscure side-on action game that we've never heard of but really enjoyed. Presentation is superb and it comes with a lovely 22-page manual that's always nice to see included. It's another great (if rather slight) collection of games.

The screen itself is a vast improvement over the original handheld, being a 4.3-inch high-resolution IPS screen with an improved resolution of 800x480. The screen bleed that some users complained about on the previous handheld is greatly improved and the overall contrast of it is superb. Shimmering also doesn't seem to be as noticeable as before and the screen's improved sharpness means Pixel Perfect mode isn't as necessary as it was on the original Evercade. Input lag is also good, either on the device itself or via a TV. It's just very satisfying to use.

One thing that is worth mentioning is that the first run of ten Evercade carts (look for the batch number CO220) do have problems when being inserted as they're simply too big for the machine. We've ended up with stuck cartridges several times now and have had to resort to using a knife to prise games free, which isn't ideal. Blaze has assured us that this only affects carts released before June 2020 but it will no doubt disappoint early adopters. The cart slot should loosen up in time, but it's baffling that this decision was made when it also affected the first Evercade.

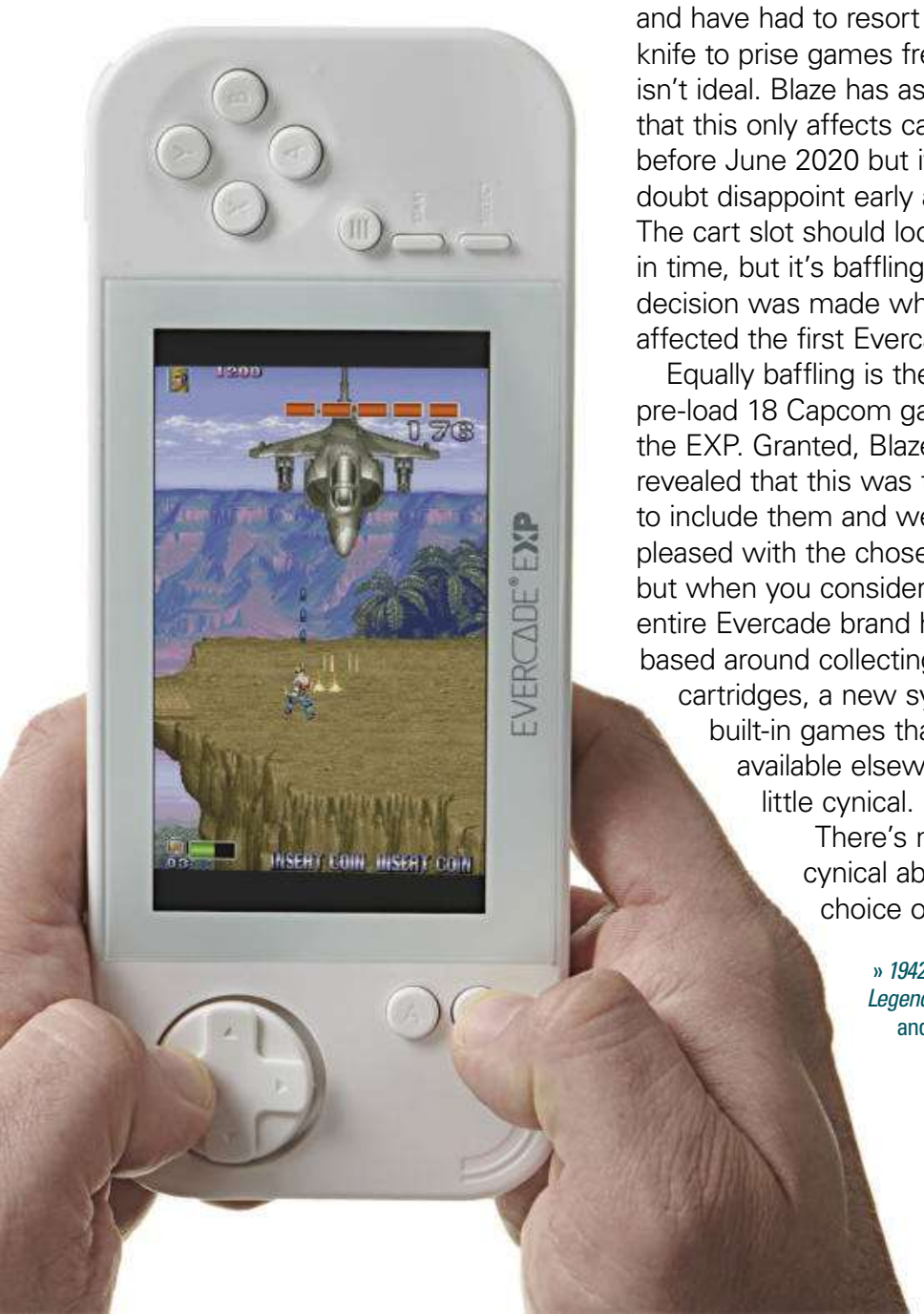
Equally baffling is the decision to pre-load 18 Capcom games onto the EXP. Granted, Blaze has now revealed that this was the only way to include them and we're very pleased with the chosen selection, but when you consider that the entire Evercade brand has been based around collecting collectible cartridges, a new system with built-in games that aren't available elsewhere feels a little cynical.

There's nothing cynical about the choice of games though, with the likes of *Strider*, *Captain Commando* and *Forgotten Worlds* easily highlighting why so many Evercade fans are excited about their inclusion. Hell, they've even included the correct ROM revision of *Strider* with different music on each stage (although we noticed a few glitches during cutscenes). Other games like *Commando*, *1943*, *Legendary Wings* and *Mercs* do a great job of showing off Tate mode, which can be activated with a simple button press.

And Tate mode really is a resounding success. It's easy to use and there's a good selection of games to test it straight out of the box. The available games are only going to expand as more arcade-themed cartridges are released and it's a good example of Blaze taking early feedback onboard and implementing it. It's a bit bizarre then that there's no button mapping currently available on the EXP though, as it was highly requested on the original system.

The Evercade EXP does support TVs but we've found it quite tricky to connect (a Mini-HDMI lead isn't included in the box). It connected fine to our older Sony 4K Bravia but wouldn't connect at all to our LG C8 OLED, which was a little disappointing as it has no problem running other devices with the same output, including the original Evercade. Speaking of output the 720p is fine, with the expected pixel shimmer that's more noticeable outside Pixel Perfect mode. The EXP is a handheld first and foremost, so we're not too bothered about the current incompatibility issues which will hopefully be fixed along with that missing button mapping.

While it's not without problems, we've been tremendously impressed with our time with the EXP and (cart issues and TV compatibility aside) it's the perfect replacement for our original handheld. It also has a very solid battery life, clocking in at around five hours. It looks and feels superb, comes with a great selection of games, has an amazing, easy-to-navigate UI and does largely justify that extra price bump. The Tate mode is exceptionally well implemented, it feels like a premium product and it proves that Blaze has no intention of letting the Evercade brand fade from gamers' minds in the coming years. If you love Capcom games and have been considering upgrading your original machine (or are brand-new to the Evercade community) you'll find the EXP to be a tremendously capable system. ✱



» *1942*, *1943*, *Commando*, *Legendary Wings*, *Vulgus* and *Mercs* all use the EXP's Tate mode.

In a nutshell

It's pricey and it might be worth waiting for a few more patches, but the Evercade EXP is still a tremendous little handheld and a significant improvement over its predecessor in many ways.

PICK OF THE MONTH

Donut Dodo

» System: Switch (tested), PC **» Buy it for:** £4.49 **» Buy it from:** Online

***Donut Dodo* is a platform game in the style of early Eighties arcade games, in which baker Billy Burns needs to gather up all of the regular donuts on each screen before claiming the gigantic donut from the titular extinct bird.** Of course, you'll have plenty of obstacles along the way, from a marauding toilet and the dodo, to lethal balloons and spike pits.

This is a game that proudly shows its influences. The stage designs are filled with ladders and moving platforms that will doubtless remind you of *Donkey Kong*, and the ever-decreasing bonus counter will do the same. What's less obvious from screenshots is the influence of *Bomb Jack* – once you collect the first donut on each stage, a random one begins to flash. The flashing ones are worth considerably more points than the regular ones, and increase in value if you maintain a combo.

This creates a fantastic tension. Running around after flashing donuts ensures more close calls with enemies and a lower time bonus, but offers a higher score potential – and with that a greater possibility of extra lives, which are awarded after every 15,000 points. The game lasts for two loops of five stages with a bonus stage in between them, with an unlockable harder difficulty and Time-Attack mode.

Donut Dodo is the kind of game that will have you coming back night after night trying to top your best score, and developer Pixel Games clearly has a great appreciation for all aspects of the arcade games of the era. The graphics capture the character and absurdity you'd often see, even down to the bezel art, the music is fantastic throughout and there are online leaderboards for you to compete on. The price point is the icing on the cake – at less than a fiver, this comes highly recommended to anybody with an appreciation for the golden age of arcade games.

>> Score **91%**

» [Switch] Air canisters launch deadly balloons which make riding this Ferris wheel a dangerous endeavour.

» [Switch] The ropes here function just like the ones in *Donkey Kong Jr.*

Neo Geo Pocket Color Selection Vol 2

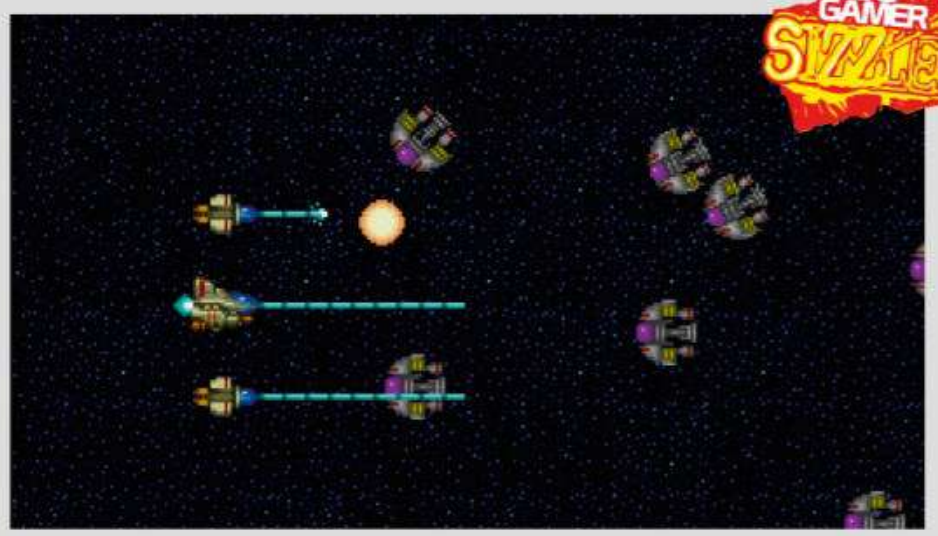
» System: Switch (tested), PC **» Buy it for:** £35.99
» Buy it from: Online

SNK brings ten more games back from its cult favourite handheld, and the emulation and front end are solid as has become expected of this series. However the game line-up is a bit of a mixed bag. The highlights are *SNK Vs Capcom: Card Fighters Clash*, *Mega Man: Battle & Fighters* and *Biomotor Unitron*.

Puzzle Link 2 is an interesting spin on the genre and *Pocket Tennis* and *Baseball Stars* are decent, but *Neo Geo Cup 98* and *Big Bang Pro Wrestling* are a little weak. *King Of Fighters: Battle De Paradise* is marred by the constant need to refer to the manual since the game wasn't translated, and minigame collection *Ganbare Neo Poké-kun* will likely prove divisive.

NICK THORPE

>> Score **74%**



Evercade: Toaplan Arcade 1

» System: Evercade, Evercade VS, Evercade EXP (tested) **» Buy it for:** £17.99
» Buy it from: Online, retail

It's a shame that *Toaplan Arcade 1* wasn't bundled with the Evercade EXP, as it does a far better job of showing off the new system's Tate mode than Irem's cart. Four of the included games: *Tiger Heli, Truxton*, *Alcon* and *Flying Shark* all utilise it and they really shine on the EXP's IPS screen. The remaining four games are more of a mixed bag. *Snow Bros* is a brilliant single-screen action game, even when played solo, while *Zero Wing* is another excellent shmup. *Teki Paki* is a surprisingly compelling puzzler, while *Guardian* is the only true weak link in the collection, being a rather basic action game.

The emulation throughout is superb and it features the usual slick Evercade presentation. In short this is an essential purchase.

DARRAN JONES

>> Score **90%**

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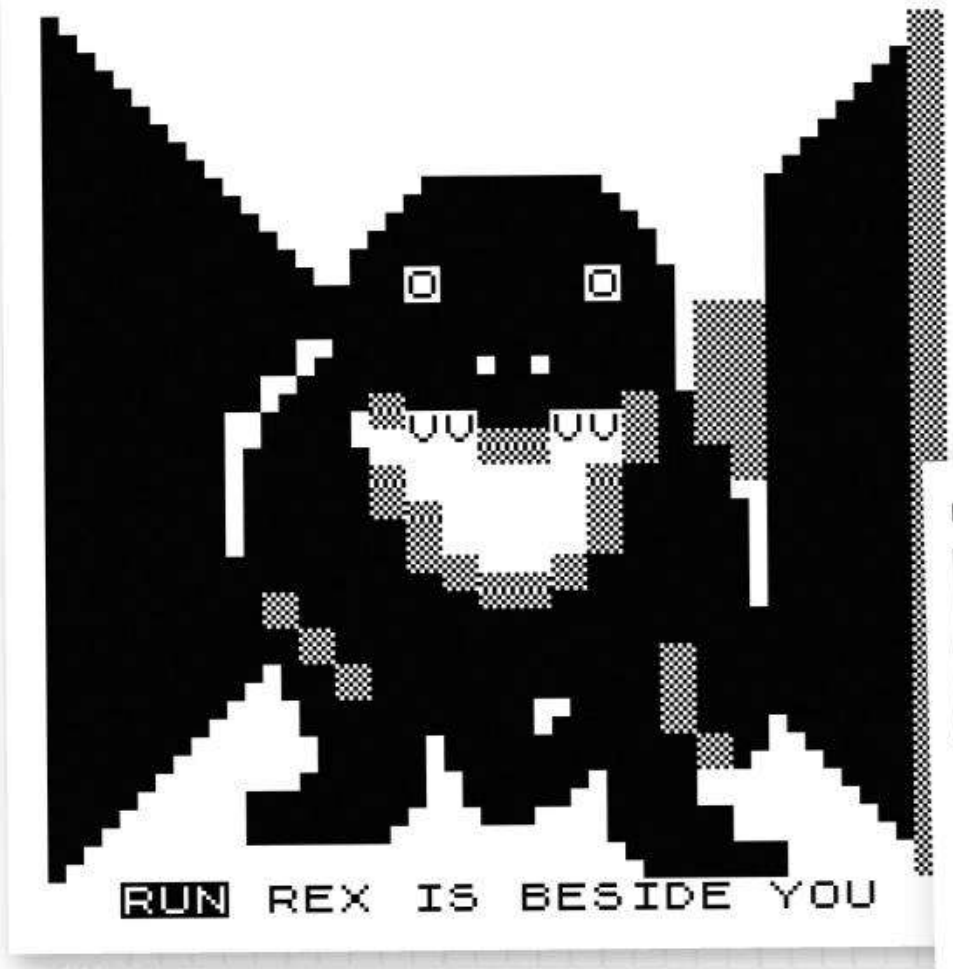
THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE/>



<!--- MAX HALL, HARD AT WORK IN HIS STUDIO ON THE CHIP SID SHOW - CHIPSIDSHOW.CO.UK --->

<MAIN HEADER>

MONSTER MAX

<INTRO> MUSIC PRODUCER AND C64 MUSIC FAN MAX HALL IS CONVERTING A CLASSIC ZX81 GAME FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT AND EXHILARATION </INTRO>

<INTRO> PREPARING THIS COLUMN UP TO TWO MONTHS IN ADVANCE CAN SOMETIMES CAUSE PROBLEMS. SEASONAL TITLES SUCH AS CHRISTMAS ROBIN SIMULATOR FOR THE SPECTRUM – BIT.LY/ROBINZX – MAY MISS COVERAGE, OR DELAYS TO A MAJOR RELEASE COULD HAPPEN. THAT WAS THE CASE WITH EYE OF THE BEHOLDER FOR THE C64, FINALLY RELEASED VIA EOTB64.COM AFTER BUGS WERE FIXED. BUT THE SHOW MUST GO ON, AND WE HAVE MORE GREAT HOMEBREW RELEASES AND CREATORS TO TALK ABOUT. </INTRO>

<!--- MAX PAINSTAKINGLY REBUILT REX, CHARACTER BY CHARACTER, IN VCHAR64. --->

<BODY> **"I always loved the ZX81 version of *3D Monster Maze*," Max Hall tells us.** "I was playing it one day and thought to myself, 'Maybe I could convert this to the C64?' I always wanted a version on that machine, and as far as I know, no one had ever done a version for the breadbox." He's been busy, but Max has still found time for the project. "I have been very busy with music production on The Surgon band project and recording my monthly Chip SID Show for Radio Free Matlock," he explains. "So doing the *Monster Maze* project has been something I just keep chipping away at on downtime."

Max's first challenge was converting the graphics. "I managed to source a font of the ZX81 charset which worked a treat on the C64. I got screen grabs from the ZX81 emulator then had to find which characters matched, and literally drew the monsters and maze character by character. Getting Rex to chase you around the maze has been a real pain, but with help from legendary coder Jim Bagley, I am about 90% happy with that routine," he tells us. "Another challenge was to flip the maze in memory; I made the maze in a 16x16 block with numbers representing the graphics to draw. One of the coders from the demoscene Carsten Berggreen helped me with a flip routine, which worked a treat, so I was incredibly grateful! I also had issues with screen tear when drawing the maze walls, but that was down to timing issues."

This isn't Max's first C64 game, as he previously produced a conversion of Imagic's Atari 2600 classic *Cosmic Ark*. "It was a bit of a miracle that it worked, it was done using the machine-code monitor in the Vice emulator! So you can imagine how painful that was," he says. "I was lucky enough to get the amazing artist Steve Day involved as well, which really sets the game off, especially the title screen. And the amazing cracking group Laxity did a bug-fix

MORE MAZES

MOOD

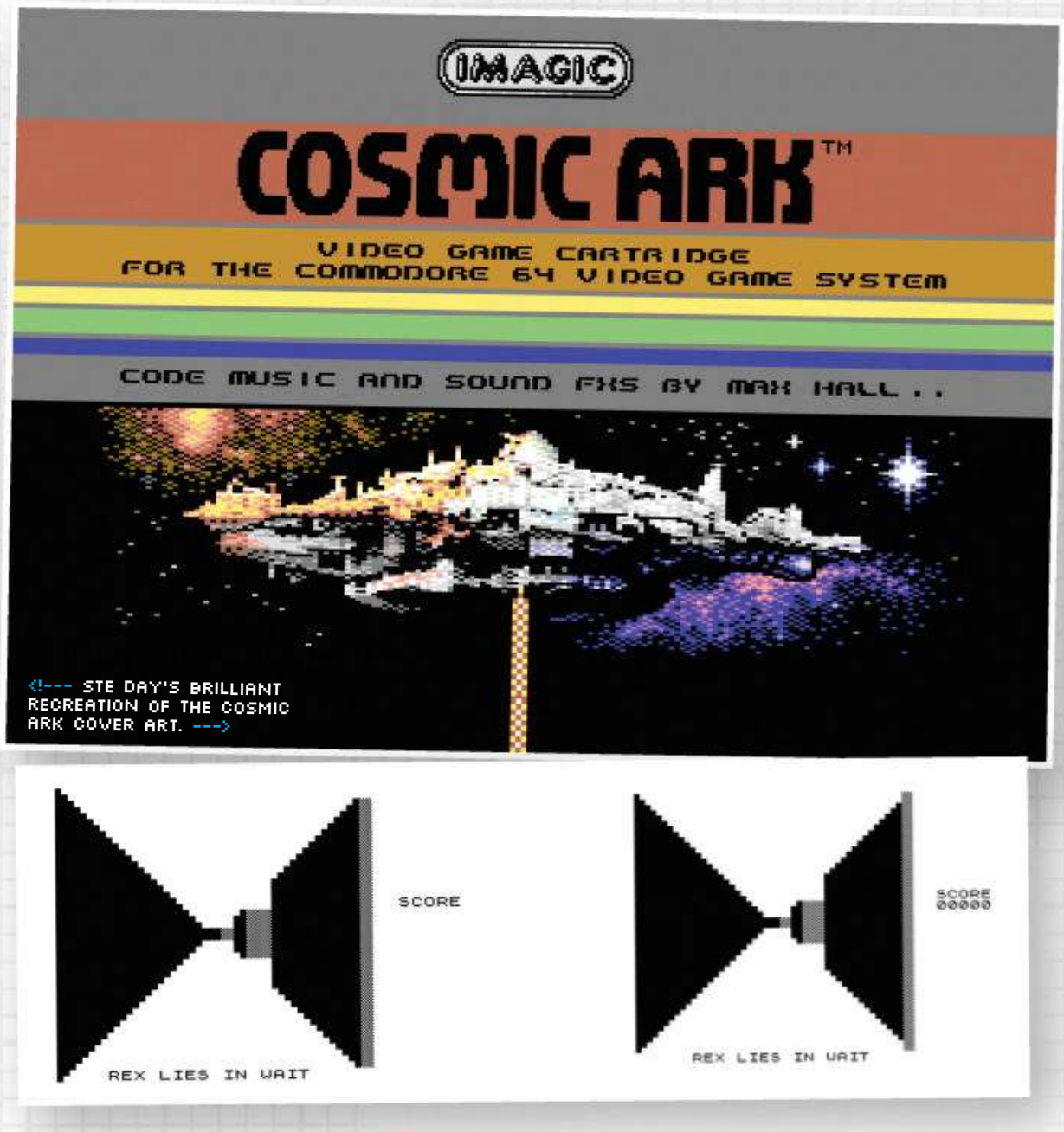
<After multiple previews by No Name, the latest version features an auto-map, multiple weapons and different enemy types in its chunky and textured mazes./>

WOLFENSTEIN 3D

<Using the 25MHz co-processor or emulation, this clever mod produces a playable adaptation of the classic Nazi shooter rendered in shades of grey (a SuperCPU is required)./>

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**



<!--- STE DAY'S BRILLIANT RECREATION OF THE COSMIC ARK COVER ART. --->

<!--- ON THE LEFT IS THE ZX81 ORIGINAL, THE RIGHT IS THE C64 CONVERSION. --->

crack for me, (bit.ly/cosmicark64) which plays great."

Will Max be adding anything to the game? "I set out to do an exact conversion, but it has been discussed that when I have finished this version, maybe to do an enhanced version with a moody SID soundtrack and footstep sounds when Rex approaches – which would create a great atmosphere, but all that is just in the ideas stage," he admits. "The game will be available as a digital download free of charge, as it is just a fun project. The idea was to enter it into the 16K Cartridge competition, but it has taken me far too long to develop. The amount of positive feedback already has been humbling, so it makes it all worthwhile." You can try the demo for yourself at bit.ly/3dmm64 </BODY>

<INTRO> FIRST-PERSON MAZE FUN FOR C64 FANS </INTRO>

MINOTRACE

After his 3D space combat simulator *Gates Of The Ancients*, Dr Mortalwombat's raycaster makes clever textured mazes for you to race through (no combat involved).

GREY

Still in development, *Grey* is a promising effort by developer Piotr Kózka that has coloured Commodore signs for doors and enemies to blast for keys and ammo.

THE RED SERPENT INVASION

Demogroup TRSI unleashed this preview with its raycaster and physics engine, allowing the player to collect keys, shoot enemies and find health.

NEWSBYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

Amiga: Zooperdan converted the brilliant C64 puzzle game *Luma*. Pay your own price and get it at bit.ly/luma-amiga

Amstrad GX4000/Plus: The 50th anniversary of Atari was marked by Cyrille of the GGP Team converting *Missile Command*. Choose your price and get it at bit.ly/missile-gx4000

Atari 8-Bit: The C64 update of *Bruce Lee*, entitled *Return Of Fury*, has been converted. Play it at bit.ly/returnoffury-a8

C64: Anthony Messane is working on the virus-busting puzzle game *Dr Maria*. Visit @sysantmin on Twitter for updates.

Game Boy Color: A physical cartridge of *Magic & Legend: Time Knights* can be ordered now. There's a playable demo of the game available at ghamson.itch.io/timeknights

Mega Drive: The SNK classic *Windjammers* has arrived in alpha form (it's at the top of this page). More at bit.ly/windjammers-alpha

MSX2+: 9958 Crew released its non-violent platformer *Ghostly Manor*, inspired by *Solomon's Key*. More at bit.ly/ghostly-msx

SNES: If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the multiplayer kitchen – *Supercooked* (goldlocke.itch.io/supercooked) is the 16-bit homage to the brilliant *Overcooked*.

Spectrum Next: Converted from a mobile game, *Trainyard Express* is a clever puzzle game of laying down rail tracks and coloured trains. Find it at bit.ly/trainyard-next

Various: Heracleum's *Manic Mission* brings together classic gameplay from *Manic Miner* and *Impossible Mission*, with 30 screens themed around other games (including *Skool Daze*). Try the beta – with Spectrum and C64 themes – at bit.ly/manicmission

Meanwhile, Lt Coyote pays tribute to *Wizard Of Wor* and *Lady Tut* by combining them into one PC game – *Wizard Of Tut*. It's available at ltcoyote.itch.io/wizard-of-tut

CHAMPION CODER

JONAS HULTÉN

<INTRO> JONAS HAS BEEN A PROGRAMMER FOR THE KOLLEKTIVET GAMES CREATION COLLECTIVE SINCE 2012 </INTRO>

<INFO BY: FROM: SWEDEN WEBSITE: KOLLEKTIVET.NU/HERO FORMAT: VARIOUS PREVIOUS GAMES: COSMOS (C64), BRUCE LEE II (C64), VOLLEY FOR TWO (C128) WORKING ON: HERO (VIC-20) />

<!--- JONAS ALSO CREATED THE JASM ASSEMBLER AIMED AT OLDER COMPUTER PROCESSORS (INCLUDING 6502 AND Z80). --->

HOW DID YOU START WRITING HOMEBREW GAMES?

<The turning point was Christmas 2012 when my brother and I decided to port his childhood favourite arcade game *Cosmos* to the C64. That resulted in a small library of code and tools I could extend as I continued to make games for vintage machines./>

WHY PORT AN ATARI 2600 GAME?

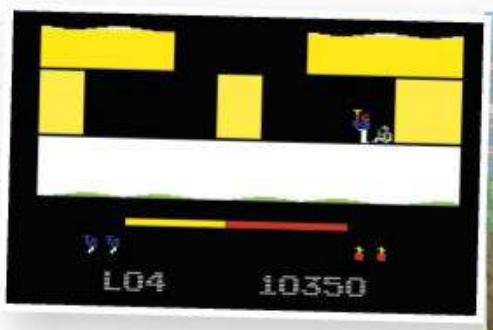
<Porting a 2600 game wouldn't look too different so it was a good starting point. The 2600 has severely limited hardware sprite capabilities which would keep the number of moving objects down enough to be doable in software. I wanted to make *Scramble*, but I had problems already at the drawing table with graphics memory restrictions. I gave away my Atari 2600 with games to a friend. That reminded me of *HERO*, which was one of the flagship titles for the 2600 in my opinion./>

WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACED?

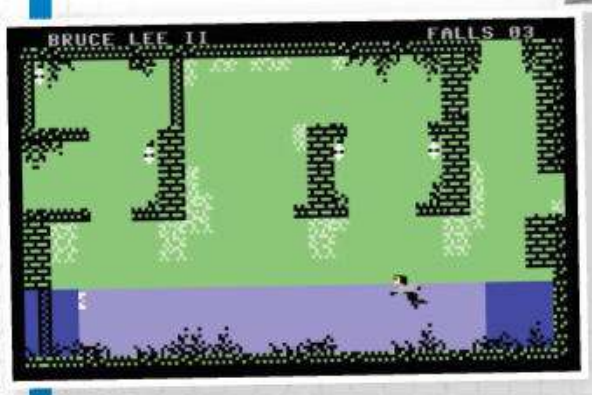
<Not having any hardware sprites but making a game that looks like it has. Almost all CPU time is spent emulating the 2600 hardware sprites and collision detection. The 2600 has 128 colours so colour gradients look nice and it's hard to make that look good with 16 colours, with added restrictions on which ones can be used on the VIC./>

DID YOU MAKE ANY CHANGES?

<The intro is completely new, the game has all the features of the original. All 256 rooms are the same; there are minor differences because I had to align walls more coarsely than the 2600. The plan was to have a grand ending, but I ran out of memory and didn't want to require a 35KB RAM expansion. I found a bug in the original where the laser can be ineffective against removable walls in some situations. I learned that it's possible to destroy walls with the laser while doing the conversion. I didn't know that when I played the C64 version as a kid./>



<!--- [VIC-20] RESCUING THE MINER AT THE END OF HERO'S FIFTH LEVEL. --->



<!--- [C64] JONAS PORTED BRUNO R MARCOS'S PC GAME BRUCE LEE II BACK TO THE C64. --->

<!--- [C128] VOLLEY FOR TWO CLEVERLY USES TWO SCREENS SIMULTANEOUSLY, ONE FOR GAMEPLAY AND ONE FOR THE SCOREBOARD. --->

DATABURST

TYNESOFT COMMODORE 16 CLASSICS

<INFO FORMAT: GAME BOY COLOR CREDITS: WLS (LÁSZLÓ RAJCSÁNYI) PRICE: $23 (CART ONLY) / $34 (BOX & BOOKLET) WEB: BIT.LY/TYNESOFTC16 SHOP.INSIDEGADGETS.COM />

<BODY> **László Rajcsányi was a huge fan of the Commodore 16 growing up, and in particular the games of Tynesoft.** With the help of GB Studio, he has been recreating some of his childhood favourites for the Game Boy Color. This special physical release in association with Inside Gadgets comes with a glossy box and instruction booklet. This reveals the controls for each game and credits for the original titles.

In terms of gameplay, there is plenty of variety, although the quality varies. Aside from the infamously poor *Super Gran*, a lot of fun is to be had with the bouncy *Pogo Pete* and the *Amidar*-style *Wacky Painter*. Shoot-'em-up fans have *Battle Star*, *Rig Attack* and *Zap 'Em* to enjoy, as well as *Missile Command* variant *Vox*. You can become a thief in *Raffles*, ferry uranium in *Lunar Docking* and shoot pesky varmints in *Gunslinger*. The *Donkey Kong* clone *Climb It* and the classic *Jet Set Willy* round out the list with some fun platform action. The included games all look and sound authentic to the original hardware, and while some are basic in their execution the sheer variety means you can switch between them when bored. The lavish presentation of the boxed edition is appreciated too. Recommended for collectors and fans of the C16 alike. </BODY>

SCORE: **82%**

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**

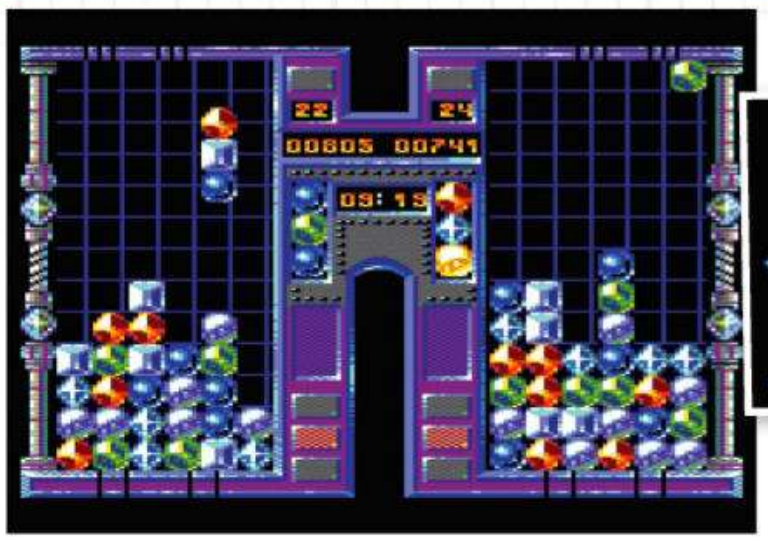
THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<!--- [AMIGA] STEAMKNIGHT'S NENONOIR WAS THE COMPETITION WINNER, WHICH ISN'T SURPRISING AS IT'S A HIGHLY IMPRESSIVE ACHIEVEMENT. --->

AMIGA BLITZ BASIC JAM

<INFO FORMAT: AMIGA CREDITS: ORGANISED BY ZOOPERDAN PRICE: FREE DOWNLOADS WEB: ITCH.IO/JAM/ABBGJAM />

<BODY> **Running from March to October 2022, an impressive 13 entries were created with Blitz Basic – all now available at the link above.** Third place went to *Settle The World* from Christian Wiegel, an impressive work-in-progress that recreates the gameplay of *Civilization*. Second place was *Capacitor's Revenge* by Pixelplop, an update of a classic 8-bit shoot-'em-up where you must defend the Amiga's motherboard. And the deserved winner was *NEONNoir* from Steamknight, an outstanding point-and-click adventure where you play a private detective exploring a cyberpunk-style city for a missing girl. Personal favourites were shoot-'em-up *Ace*, the *Daredevil Dennis Remix* and the incomplete *My Life Sucks* (an interestig first-person exploration game where you control a sentient robot vacuum cleaner). </BODY>



<!--- WW --->

CPC JEWELS

FORMAT: AMSTRAD CPC CREDITS: ESP SOFT PRICE: $1.00 DIGITAL DOWNLOAD/PHYSICAL CASSETTE TBC WEB: BIT.LY/CPCJEWELS />

<BODY> **In this recreation of Sega's *Columns*, you can play solo, against another player or the computer in three modes.** Classical is an endless game, Time Attack gives a fixed time limit to score as many points as possible, while Stage mode provides a series of increasingly tough challenges. Three difficulty settings are also included. The graphics throughout are excellent, especially the way the gems disappear when matched, and the title tune is very good – but in-game sounds are limited. *Columns* fans will lap this up, with a physical cassette version to be available soon. </BODY>

SCORE: 79%

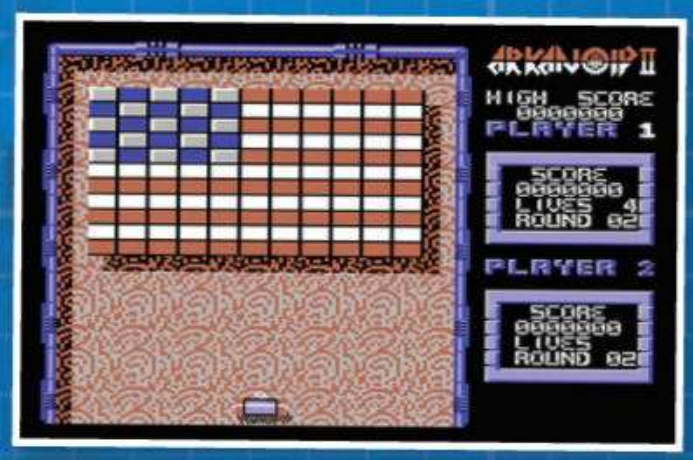
PROCESSING

<INTRO> MARTYN CARROLL'S ARTICLE ON ARKANOID'S HISTORY (RG239) PROMPTED HIM TO RECREATE THE TRICKY TOURNAMENT ARKANOID. HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED… </

<BODY> **"*Tournament Arkanoid* was essentially a 1987 update: the 32 screen layouts were all new, with an emphasis on making it more challenging (gold and especially silver bricks were more plentiful)," Martyn tells us.** So what's in the new update? "The new Spectrum version updates the original *Arkanoid* conversion by Ocean Software (code by Mike Lamb, graphics by Ronnie Fowles and music by Mark Jones)," continues Martyn. "It features a new title screen by Jarrod Bentley (who helped hack the code), the mothership is now red, and screen layouts were created using Mark Alexander's *Arkanoid* Editor. Due to the Spectrum's narrower playing area, the screens had to be redesigned. The overall difficulty level should be consistent with the arcade version – it is *meant* to be tough!"

This inspired the writer of this column to try out the editors available for C64 and Amstrad *Arkanoid* and modify them. The Spectrum version is available now at: bit.ly/tourark – with the possibility of adding mouse and Kempston support. The other 8-bit versions will be uploaded there when they are finished. </BODY>

<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM] HERE'S A LOOK AT JARROD BENTLEY'S NEW LOADING SCREEN. --->



<!--- [C64] ROUND 2'S AMERICAN FLAG AS IT WILL APPEAR ON THE C64 VERSION OF TOURNAMENT ARKANOID. --->

ACHIEVEMENT HUNTERS

Discussing our digital trophy cabinets

DARRAN JONES

NICK THORPE

TIM EMPEY

Microsoft launched the first unified means of showing off your gaming prowess way back in 2005, and today we just expect that notification to pop up when we do something cool. So, how do we feel about achievements – and how do our collections measure up?

NICK

It's been a long time since the Xbox 360 introduced the concept of achievements to the gaming world. Have they changed the way you play games at all?

DARRAN

They certainly did at the time, because it was just a fun way to get that little bit extra out of your games. I don't worry about it so much now though.

NICK

I like to think my habits haven't changed, but I recently maxed out Sonic's levels in *Sonic Frontiers* just to get the platinum trophy. I wouldn't have done that if I'd played it on Switch, because there would have been no incentive to do it.

TIM

They have. It was kind of fun competing against friends at

» [Xbox 360] *Double Dragon* has some interesting achievements, like completing the first stage without taking a hit.

» [PS3] *Valkyria Chronicles* didn't have trophy support on PS3, instead using in-game medals as a substitute.

first, but as years went on I gave up achievement hunting and just played the games I wanted to. However, if it was a really good game I'd try to get all 1,000 points. What was the first game you got all the achievements for?

NICK

That's a good question, and I actually had to look it up. Turns out it was *Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown*. It's still the only Xbox game I have 100% of the achievements for, and it's only worth 400 points.

DARRAN

According to my Xbox app it was *Call Of Duty 2*, although I can't remember getting the 13 achievements, or what they were. Nick only has one Xbox game with full achievements, I have nine. How many have you managed, Tim?

TIM

That's good going, Nick. I have, er, 20 on *VF5*. But I do have 14 other games fully completed, *Bayonetta*, *Dark Souls II* and *III*, and for some reason *Lego Batman 2*. *Bayonetta* was the first one I got all the achievements on, I'm actually quite proud of that.

DARRAN

Was that around the time when everyone was competing for the highest achievement score at work? I can vividly remember getting into an intense competition with Ryan King which saw me completing rubbish games like *Open Season*, *Eragon* and *Fuzion Frenzy 2* because they were so easy to complete. That shame is publicly available now for all to see.

TIM

Before I had an Xbox 360 I actually helped Ryan with his gamer score – he let me play *Dead Rising* on his machine, which I enjoyed. And then he forced me to play PopCap's *Feeding Frenzy*…

> "I love Valkyria Chronicles so much that I bought it for both PS3 and PS4, and beat it on both"
>
> **NICK THORPE**

DARRAN

How naughty, I'll be having a word with him about that. Although, that's no different from when I used to make both my girls play *Pokémon* for hours on end because I couldn't be bothered with all the grinding and just wanted to beat the Gym Leaders. Does a confession like that make me a terrible parent?

NICK

I'm sure they enjoyed it. At least, that's what I'm choosing to believe. It's interesting that Nintendo never followed Microsoft's lead on that, but Sony did. Didn't the PS3 launch without trophies?

» [Xbox 360] Pursuing achievements caused Darran to play games he probably wouldn't have otherwise touched, like *Open Season*.

DARRAN

The PS3 launched without all sorts of features. There's a surprising number of games without trophies (over 270), which annoyed me at the time as I actually stopped playing *Valkyria Chronicles* because it didn't have trophy support, which I'd never do now.

TIM

Tro… phies? I haven't had a PlayStation since the PS2. I guess Sony just copied Microsoft in that respect. It's a good idea, I do like it when they pop up.

NICK

I love *Valkyria Chronicles* so much that I bought it for both PS3 and PS4, and beat it on both. But I've only got 26% of the PS4 version's trophies, so I've never been tempted to go back and try for the platinum.

DARRAN

My proudest PS3 gaming moment was getting the platinum on *Dead Space*. It took me three playthroughs and a powerful DLC gun. So worth it though. Any thoughts on why Nintendo never went down this route?

TIM

I don't know, I suppose it's a bit superfluous really.

DARRAN

That's a fair point, achievements and trophies also seem to require a heavy online component, something which Nintendo simply doesn't seem to be interested in.

NICK

That makes sense – even the Switch is really limited in terms of its online friend system. To be honest, I've never missed achievements when I'm playing retro games or Nintendo games that don't have them.

DARRAN

See, I do sometimes like the idea of old games having achievements (I got 100% on *Double Dragon*) if only because it will sometimes require you to approach a game in a new way. I also love hearing that little 'ding' when you do unlock something. So before we go what scores do people have? I've got 71,213 points on Xbox and 4,213 trophies on PlayStation, five of which are platinums. Do I win?

NICK

I've got 13,490 points on Xbox and 1,558 PlayStation trophies, eight of which are platinums.

TIM

Mine's 216,931, suck it!

» [PS4] *Sonic Origins* is one of Nick's eight platinum trophies, to the surprise of nobody.

» [Xbox 360] Tim's first 1,000-point game was *Bayonetta*, which is a pretty impressive one to accomplish.

» [PS3] Darran got the platinum for *Dead Space*, but he bought DLC to do it. Is that cheating?

» [Xbox 360] It's estimated that getting all of the *Dark Souls II* and *III* achievements takes 80-100 hours. Each.

8/13
"Hunval? A-are you confessing your love for me? I don't know what to do if you confess right before such an important match, nyan!

» [Vita] Nick has the *Steins;Gate* platinum trophy, which says a lot about his taste in games.

READERS REACT

Do you care about gaming achievements?

Metal Jesus Rocks
I love them… it's fun to dig into parts of a game that I might skip over if there wasn't some weird achievement to collect. And yes, I wish Nintendo had something similar.

Shaun Robbins
If I truly love a game (*Ghost Of Tsushima*, *Burnout Paradise*, *Final Fantasy VII Remake* to name a few) then I'll go for the plat, otherwise I'll get whatever trophies I can during a normal playthrough.

Lee Nattress
I was never one for collecting achievements on 360, but one will always stick in my mind because it made me laugh so hard. During a fun multiplayer match in *Front Lines: Fuel Of War* I got the 'noob' achievement – die accidentally ten times. The kicker? Zero points.

Kevin Barnes
Always enjoyed them… then I rented *Avatar: The Burning Earth* out for the easy 1,000G. I've felt dirty ever since!

David Haywood
It depends on the implementation. I like them for progress tracking, and also if they encourage me to explore a part of a game's mechanics I might have missed. Online achievements/trophies can get in the bin though, as they depend on multiplayer servers staying active.

Zahir Hassan
Not fussed with them. I am here to enjoy games. Not chasing trophies.

Richard Stanton
No studio was ever as good at them as Bizarre Creations, *Project Gotham Racing* and *Geometry Wars* games especially. 'Pacifism' was such a genius achievement it became an actual mode in *GW2*.

Chris Michael
Never bothered trying to get them but always had a look to see what they were when they popped up.

Andrew Johnston
I used to do the whole 'achievement hunter' thing, but I've found that it can make things a little stressful and take away from the underlying enjoyment. I now feel like it's another modern gaming feature that made things worse. Older titles are a lot more chill.

Mike Larky
If I could I would disable them! You can spend hours chasing them and end up taking the fun out of the game for yourself.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH **THE RETRO KEYHOLE**

OUT ZONE
"This game absolutely blew me away. It is everything I love about run-and-gun shooters and without doubt one of the best arcade games I've ever played."
PAID: £500

SKY SKIPPER
"An unreleased game by Nintendo which took me on a journey overseas to meet Billy Mitchell, Walter Day and get exclusive access to the last remaining cabinet left in the world located in the vaults of Nintendo America."
PAID: £1!

SPACE INVADERS
"This game is where it all started for me. The cabinet art makes it the most striking arcade machine ever made in my opinion. It brings so much nostalgia to everyone that approaches it, too."
PAID: £750

RESCUE
"This is a prototype machine which the designer, the late Chris Oberth, designed the final game around. I bought it from his family. It's the perfect game of risk and reward."
PAID: £1,000

BIO

NAME:
Alex Crowley

LOCATION:
Oxfordshire

ESTIMATED VALUE OF COLLECTION:
£40,000+

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
SNES

FAVOURITE GAME:
Defender

YOUTUBE:
@TheArcadeArchive

THE ARCADE ARCHIVE

A collection where everyone is welcome

It is a dilemma which confronts all collectors. What should they do when their collection exceeds the space they have at home or the tolerance level of their partner? Alex Crowley has come up with a novel solution. He's opened an arcade museum.

"My collection has always been too big," he laughs. "It goes through every collector's mind because we always want more! The reason for the museum is this amazing community of like-minded enthusiasts I met through the UKVAC forums. It's full of really nice people, always willing to help if you have problems with a machine. I love talking to people about this stuff and if, by opening a museum, it allows me to give up my job as a bricklayer and talk about stuff I really enjoy, I can't think of a better way to spend the rest of my life!"

For Alex, the friendships he's made through amassing his impressive collection of over 50 arcade cabinets are as important as the actual machines he owns and so it makes sense to share them with others. Visitors to Arcade Archive, located in the beautiful Grade II listed Belvedere Mill in Stroud, which also houses technology and gaming museum, The Cave, can expect a hands-on historical tour of coin-ops, starting with Sega's electro-mechanical *Gun Fight* from 1970, through pioneering titles like *Pong*, into the golden era of the Eighties with such classics as *Robotron: 2084* and *Out Run*.

Alex began collecting games from the moment he got a Spectrum in 1982 and he would go on to amass over 200 SNES titles, and an almost-complete set of Nintendo Game & Watch handhelds. Everything changed, though, when he acquired his first arcade cabinet in 2009, Taito's *Space Invaders Part II*, and his attention turned to coin-ops. "My arcade cabinet collection grew pretty quickly," he says. "I was selling off my home stuff to buy my next cab! I got *Donkey Kong Jr* next and I got obsessed. I really wanted a complete collection of Nintendo arcade cabinets, though now I've changed and I go for games I want to play and not just own for the sake of it."

It's a fair point. As proud as Alex is to have ultra-rare titles like *Rescue* by Stern and Nintendo's *Sheriff* in his collection, his *Defender* machine gets a lot more play. Yet the Nintendo obsession did lead him down the rabbit hole of trying to track down games the Japanese company had developed but never fully released. And that led to *Sky Skipper*. "I was part of an arcade raid up North," he explains, a 'raid' meaning an expedition, usually done by a group of eager collectors, to recover machines left festering in warehouses or abandoned arcades. "On the way up, we even joked, 'Oooh imagine if we find *Sky Skipper*.' And we did!"

You can play *Sky Skipper*, one of only a handful of PCBs surviving from 1981, in a beautifully restored cabinet at Arcade Archive, just one of many reasons why you should immediately make a date to visit Alex and his wonderful collection in situ.

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

ASTEROIDS DELUXE

"Previously owned by the late Peter Grant of Led Zeppelin. It was purchased as a birthday present for his son and I found it hiding in a corner of a reclamation yard in Frome."

PAID: £550

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

SHERIFF

■ "This was the first game Shigeru Miyamoto worked on for Nintendo, designing the artwork for the cabinet. It's incredibly rare, with only four cabinets known to exist, and I love its unique controller, which looks like a gas knob!"

PAID: £2,500

BARGAIN HUNT

Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

The original Amiga game with the beautiful box art can go for over **£60** though if you're happy with just the game disks, you can pick them up for under **£20.** A sealed copy of the Lynx cartridge recently went for **£25.** Was that you, Darran? [Nope – Ed]

GOLDEN AXE

You should be able to get this fine scrolling axe-'em-up, complete on Mega Drive, for around **£30,** though if you're on a budget, you could opt for a loose copy of *Mega Games 2* for **£12** and get *The Revenge Of Shinobi* and *Streets Of Rage* thrown in.

PLAQUE ATTACK

Activision's brush-'em-up can be yours for under **£5** if you're happy with just the cartridge. Double the price if you want to own a boxed copy.

TURRICAN

We know the Amiga version is better but as boxed copies of the Rainbow Arts original are going for over **£50,** why not opt for the C64 budget re-release by Kixx which should only set you back a few quid.

JOE & MAC: CAVEMAN NINJA

Loose SNES cartridges go for **£10-£15** with boxed copies around double that. Personally, we would go for the *Ultimate Caveman Collection*, comprising the first three prehistoric adventures, which recently sold for a very reasonable **£35.**

ARCADIA

Imagine were pioneers in the fields of marketing and presentation so if you fancy collecting all of its pre-1984 tape releases, featuring that distinctive logo and striking artwork, why not start with *Arcadia* on the Vic-20 at just **£5.**

SILICON DREAMS

Although Level 9's HUGE adventures didn't fare well, there are still plenty of interesting games from the developer to discover. *Silicon Dreams* is an excellent compilation of three games and remains relatively cheap with an Atari ST version recently selling for **£15** sealed.

ANOTHER WORLD

This felt like a watershed game on the Amiga and as a result its popularity has kept its price high. Expect to pay **£60-£90** for a boxed copy of the game in great condition.

HOW MUCH?!

MARKO'S MAGIC FOOTBALL

As we went to press, a factory sealed copy of *Marko's Magic Football* for the Mega-CD had a 'Buy it now' price of **£939.99.** If you're on Premiership footballer wages, you may have snapped it up already.

Prices correct at time of print

MY RETRO LIFE

PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT OUR **SHARED PASSION**

CREATING DESPERATION

David Crookes remembers the time he made a game

It all began with a game of Scalextric – although not the physical slot-car racing set that scores of kids had set up in their bedroom. Although I did own one of those (won courtesy of toilet paper makers Andrex, no less), what actually proved inspirational was the 1987 videogame by Leisure Genius which came free with my Amstrad CPC 6128.

The game was a terrible recreation of a much-loved toy and it looked as dull as it played. But there was a part that enthralled a young me: the bit where you could create your own tracks. I believed I could produce a unique driving game in some small way through a series of sick-inducing twists and turns. From that moment on, the desire to develop was instilled. Trouble is I felt snookered because I'd never truly got to grips with programming.

Instead, I spent months (OK years) looking for shortcuts – packages that could help someone with only a smattering of BASIC knowledge achieve a dream. I dabbled with Incentive Software's 3D Construction Kit to create worlds to explore but found it too slow. I gave the Graphic Adventure Creator a try but only got halfway towards producing a text adventure before feeling lost with its direction.

I'd feast my eyes on the promised land by glaring at adverts such as Sprites Alive (dubbed as "The Ultimate Games Designing System"). And, when I moved on to the Amiga, I dabbled with the Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit and thought I'd give the programming language AMOS a try. I got as far as buying Jason Holborn's fantastic book, *Ultimate AMOS* but didn't delve much further.

And then it happened. I read about Reality: The Ultimate Software Construction Kit in *Amiga Format* (a subscription I'd won by getting Letter Of The Week on Digitiser!) and it appeared to be the perfect system. It didn't require in-depth coding knowledge other than an idea of how variables worked. You'd work with a pre-coded, complete game and pick it apart, changing bits and bobs to create something new.

These games came on 'skeleton disks', two of which came bundled with the main software – a suite of apps that let you create animations, images, sound, introductions and slideshows. Reality also included a picture and graphics converter, a background creator and a text editor along with disk utilities, all of which could be chosen from a main menu. It was really easy to use. As a massive fan of the *Dizzy* series, I was excited to see one skeleton disk included a graphic adventure platformer (the other was a side-scrolling shmup).

I played around to create a homage to the Oliver twins and I was encouraged by Reality's maker, the super-friendly Brian Bell, of BPM Promotions. I eventually created a game called *Desperation* filled with a stack of locations, a small cast of characters and a heap of puzzles, collectibles and health-zapping nasties. The graphics were ever-so-slightly tweaked from the pre-made skeleton game (I'm no artist) but I concentrated on the gameplay and used the template to build my world.

Once done, I showed it to a few people and it was taken on by 5th Dimension Licenceware. Later, it was named PD Selection Of The Month in the September 1997 issue of *Amiga Format*. Wow! A great game, then? Well, that's pushing it.

If anything, *Desperation* taught me many things, the first being that taking one shortcut shouldn't lead to taking two! Reality was an amazing package, promoting creativity by ripping away the barrier of learning to code, yet, I didn't properly plan the thing out. Parts were implemented on the fly and it showed.

MAKE A RETRO GAME

Other game-creation packages to try

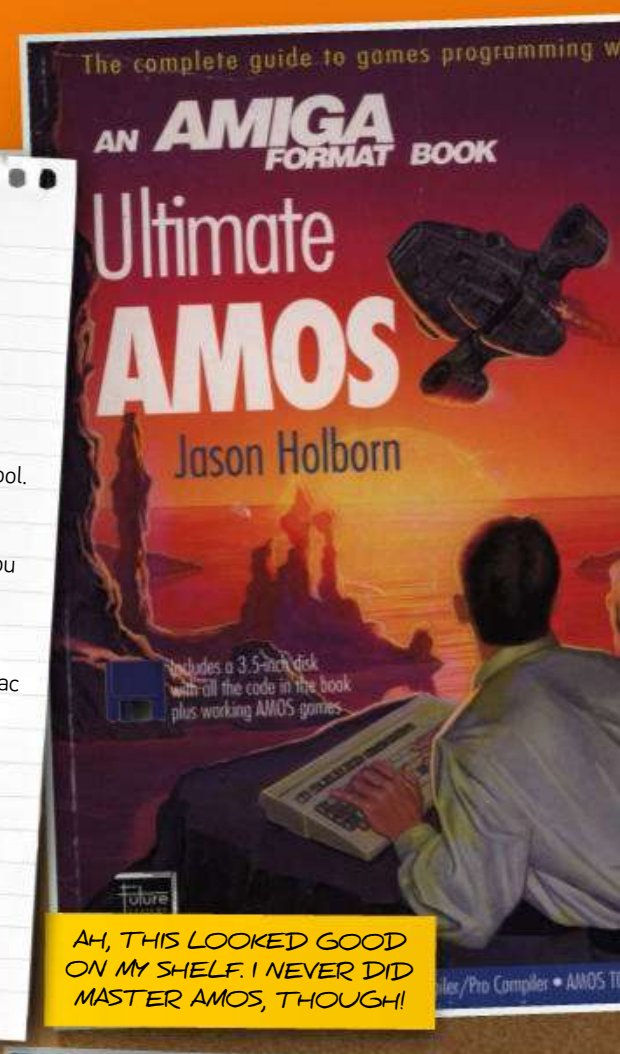
DIZZYAGE
Dozens of *Dizzy* games starring the eggs-cellent character himself have been created using this free tool.

RICHCAST
Backed by the Oliver twins, the RichCast editor lets you create voice-controlled interactive fiction.

GAMEMAKER
Billed as the "Ultimate 2D Game Engine", this PC and Mac tool has been used to produce a host of indie hits.

RPG MAKER
This one has been around for nearly 30 years and it provides all the assets and tools you need to create your own RPGs.

TWINE
Love text adventures? Then open-source Twine – available as a browser-based app – is sure to become your go-to package.


The complete guide to games programming w
AN AMIGA FORMAT BOOK
Ultimate AMOS
Jason Holborn
Includes a 3.5-inch disk with all the code in the book plus working AMOS games
Future
AH, THIS LOOKED GOOD ON MY SHELF. I NEVER DID MASTER AMOS, THOUGH!

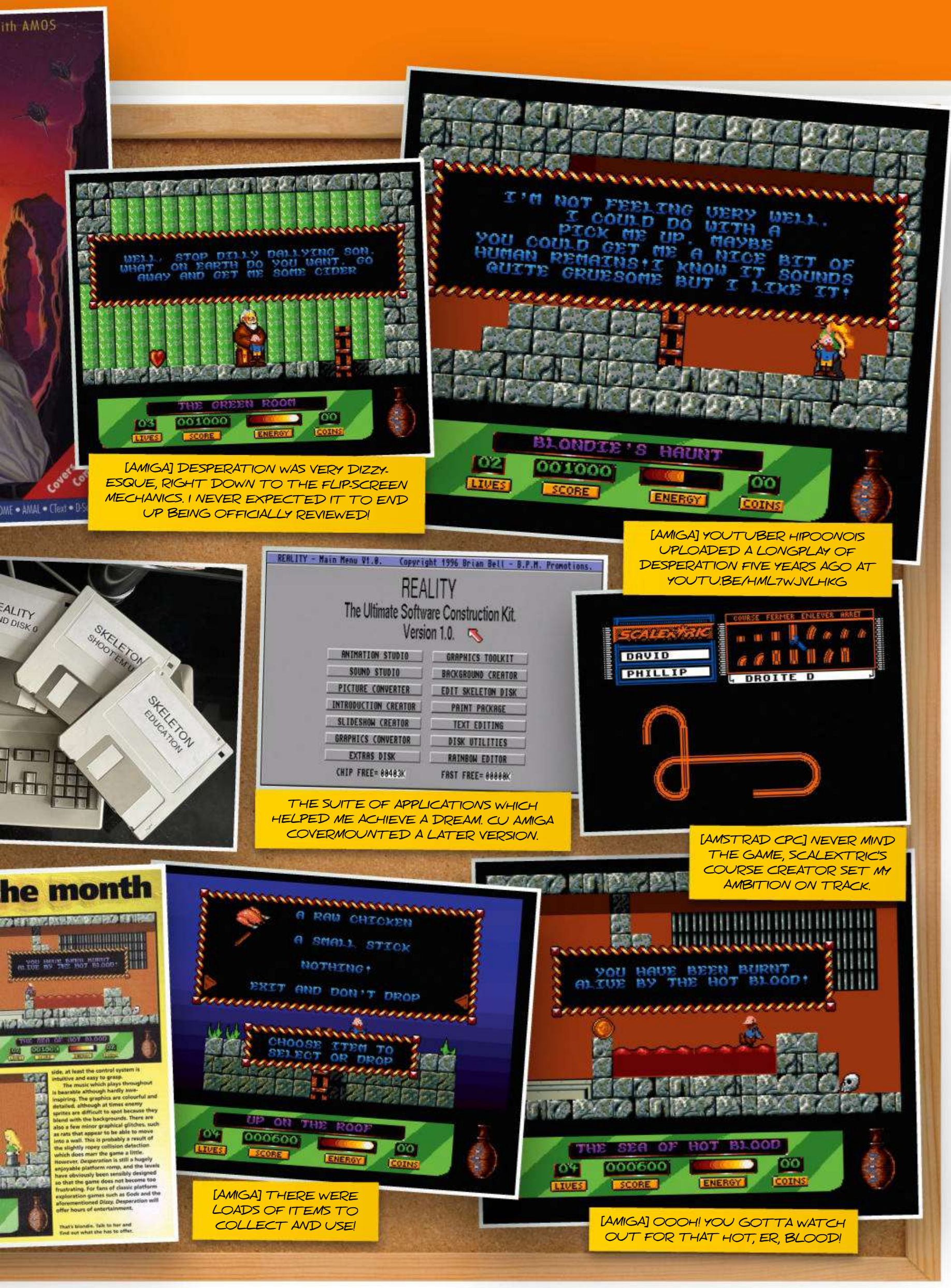
In this magazine, we see how diligently developers craft their games, often producing intricate design documents. With a template to hand, I mostly made up *Desperation* as I went along, to the extent that some puzzles were baffling (give a lady a chicken and she gives you a syringe).

There were also a few spelling mistakes, the biggest whopper being the spelling of the main character, written as Rob Crucade. In big letters. Right at the start!

Still, *Amiga Format*'s reviewer kindly pulled the punches ("historically dubious", "a trifle illogical", "ropey collision detection", all fair enough), although I also suspect he was rubbish at playing games ("hours of entertainment" – really?). A YouTuber who played the game did so in eight minutes but said the glitches and bugs meant it could be completed in 30 seconds. Who knew? Not me!

But hey, I did it. I created a game. And while it earned me zero cash (and likely just as little credibility), it gave me a greater appreciation for the talents of game developers and showed the importance of planning and paying attention to detail. Since then, I've learned Python and continued to dabble with other packages, but would I release another game? I don't think the world is that desperate. Or is it?

REALITY MASTER DISK
SKELETON ADVENTURE
REALITY ART DISK 0
THE REALITY PACKAGE CAME ON NUMEROUS DISKS. EACH GAME TEMPLATE HAD A SKELETON DISK OF ITS OWN.
PD selection of t
DESPERATION
IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN I FLICKED THROUGH AMIGA FORMAT IN SEPTEMBER 1997!


ith AMOS
WELL, STOP DILLY DALLYING SON. WHAT ON EARTH DO YOU WANT. GO AWAY AND GET ME SOME CIDER
THE GREEN ROOM
03 LIVES
001000 SCORE
ENERGY
00 COINS
I'M NOT FEELING VERY WELL. I COULD DO WITH A PICK ME UP. MAYBE YOU COULD GET ME A NICE BIT OF HUMAN REMAINS! I KNOW IT SOUNDS QUITE GRUESOME BUT I LIKE IT!
BLONDIE'S HAUNT
02 LIVES
001000 SCORE
ENERGY
00 COINS
[AMIGA] DESPERATION WAS VERY DIZZY-ESQUE, RIGHT DOWN TO THE FLIP-SCREEN MECHANICS. I NEVER EXPECTED IT TO END UP BEING OFFICIALLY REVIEWED!
[AMIGA] YOUTUBER HIPOONOIS UPLOADED A LONGPLAY OF DESPERATION FIVE YEARS AGO AT YOUTU.BE/HML7WJVLHKG
SKELETON SHOOTEM'U
SKELETON EDUCATION
REALITY - Main Menu V1.0. Copyright 1996 Brian Bell - B.P.M. Promotions.
REALITY
The Ultimate Software Construction Kit.
Version 1.0.
ANIMATION STUDIO
SOUND STUDIO
PICTURE CONVERTER
INTRODUCTION CREATOR
SLIDESHOW CREATOR
GRAPHICS CONVERTOR
EXTRAS DISK
GRAPHICS TOOLKIT
BACKGROUND CREATOR
EDIT SKELETON DISK
PAINT PACKAGE
TEXT EDITING
DISK UTILITIES
RAINBOW EDITOR
CHIP FREE= 00483K
FAST FREE= 00000K
THE SUITE OF APPLICATIONS WHICH HELPED ME ACHIEVE A DREAM. CU AMIGA COVERMOUNTED A LATER VERSION.
SCALEXTRIC
COURSE FERMER ENLEVER ARRET
DAVID
PHILLIP
DROITE D
[AMSTRAD CPC] NEVER MIND THE GAME, SCALEXTRIC'S COURSE CREATOR SET MY AMBITION ON TRACK.
he month
A RAW CHICKEN
A SMALL STICK
NOTHING.
EXIT AND DON'T DROP
CHOOSE ITEM TO SELECT OR DROP
UP ON THE ROOF
04 LIVES
000600 SCORE
ENERGY
00 COINS
[AMIGA] THERE WERE LOADS OF ITEMS TO COLLECT AND USE!
YOU HAVE BEEN BURNT ALIVE BY THE HOT BLOOD!
THE SEA OF HOT BLOOD
04 LIVES
000600 SCORE
ENERGY
00 COINS
[AMIGA] OOOH! YOU GOTTA WATCH OUT FOR THAT HOT, ER, BLOOD!

WHICH GAME-CREATION PACKAGES DID YOU USE?

Many readers have sought to create as well as play

Joel J Games
I picked up a copy of Klik & Play at a PC fair in the mid-Nineties. I played around with that and Games Factory and then nothing until discovering the wonderful GB Studio (@GBStudioDev) and haven't looked back.

Cal
GLBasic, it has a lot of the feel that AMOS did on the Amiga, being a programming language which has some built-in game and graphics features if you want them, or you can code your own, and inline C++.

i Johnson
I've used several in the past starting with the program cart on the Philips G7000 through Pinball Construction Set on the C64, the Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit, and several games with level editors. I always enjoy those.

@Liquidream@mastodon.social
The first one I used was Graphic Adventure Creator (GAC) on C64, quickly followed by SEUCK on the same machine. When I got an Amiga, it was all about AMOS. I even saved up and bought AMOS Pro. Nowadays, I'm getting the same nostalgic thrill (if not more) from making games with PICO-8.

Fear na Riomhairi
I have used many over the years but none have topped SEUCK on the C64!

Brian Vaughn
My journey started with QBasic if we're talking retro, but I did a stint with GameMaker that was pretty fun. I have been creating with PICO-8 for the last several years and it's been a sweet spot of challenge, learning, and output.

Stephen
We teach GameMaker in NPA games dev courses and a little to S2s and 3s. It was GameMaker 2 in my previous school.

Mario Schlosser
SSI's Unlimited Adventures (1993) to build your own AD&D RPG like *Pool Of Radiance*. And it's now back on Steam!

Ron Wilhelm
Retro Gadgets was just released in Early Access and looks amazing.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA – **TWITTER.COM/RETROGAMER_MAG**

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of one of our classic retro books. Good luck everyone!

» [PC] Scarily, *Farming Simulator* is also on the verge of being eligible for **Retro Gamer** coverage.

AGRICULTURAL ACTION

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

Have you ever considered doing a feature on farming simulators and how they've evolved over the years? I'm aware that it's not the most rock 'n' roll of videogame genres and I know you've featured *Harvest Moon*, but I can't remember if there were farming games on the ZX Spectrum which was my machine of choice back in the Eighties.

Bryan Summers

Interestingly, farming was often found as a mechanic in strategy and god games in the past, rather than a main focus of the gameplay. It may be high time we look at this subject though, as the likes of *Farming Simulator* and *Stardew Valley* are here to stay, and even the notorious Facebook game *FarmVille* is 14 years old now.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

Would you ever consider a regular feature where you explore certain less well-received games, and find out the reasons why they turned out the way they are? Not in a mean spirit though. My first PlayStation game was *Spawn*, I'm fond of it, but it's not perfect and I've always wanted to know how it turned out the way it did.

Alex

We have dabbled with this sort of thing in the past. There have been features on the creation of notorious flops like *Bubsy 3D* and *Rise Of The Robots*, we've given due time to games like *Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness* in history pieces, and of course there was the Gaming's Greatest Disasters cover feature in issue 141. However, we've always thought that people might only be fascinated by the stories behind the most infamous games. Readers – would you like to see more features about games that underwhelmed?

FANZINE FANATIC

Hi Nick,

I saw you mention *Electric Brain* (Onn Lee) and fanzines in general in this month's mag. Don't know if you know but there is at least one full collection of *Electric Brain* physical copies,

» Revisiting *Electric Brain* is particularly fascinating for its coverage of happenings in Japan's gaming scene.

STAR LETTER

HOMEBREW HEROICS

» [Amiga] *Dread* is a seriously impressive piece of work – check it out if you can.

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I'm a big fan of the Homebrewer's Kit, and Andrew's work has inspired me to take a look around at what's out there. I love shooters like *Doom* but never had a PC in the Nineties, and I always used to wonder if something like it was possible on older platforms. It's amazing to look at things like *Dread* that do absolutely crazy things with the Amiga, pushing it like I never saw it pushed back then, and have the proof that it totally could have been done.

Weirdly though, the one that really got me was *Doom Resurrection* for the 32X. It's great to see the true capability of the machine, but I can't understand why the official version paid professionals made isn't as good as what some hobbyists working in their spare time could manage. What's going on with situations like that?

Peter Cornell

» [32X] *Doom Resurrection* is impressive, but its developers didn't have to rush for a hardware launch.

It comes down to a few factors, Peter. Firstly, they have the benefit of years of accumulated hardware knowledge and improved modern software tools. They also don't have to worry about hitting deadlines, and they don't have budgets limiting them to a certain cartridge size or number of floppy disks. Also, it's worth knowing that many homebrew coders are professional programmers, just not ones working on old hardware for a living – but even those who aren't are often extremely talented.

» [PlayStation] Let us know if you want to read more about flawed games like *Spawn: The Eternal*.

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plus the magazines that Onn did that evolved into *Electric Brain – Console Ma'zine* and *PC Engine Fanatics*, and then briefly *GAP* after he sold *Electric Brain*. I subscribed to them all originally (through to the end) and still have them.

You may have seen this already but with the help of a friend, we got them all scanned at bit.ly/OnnLeeZines

Andy Harris

Thanks for letting us know, Andy – it's fantastic to see the effort going into preserving fanzine culture right now. You can be assured we spent a good time looking through those during the Christmas break.

TRULY RETRO

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

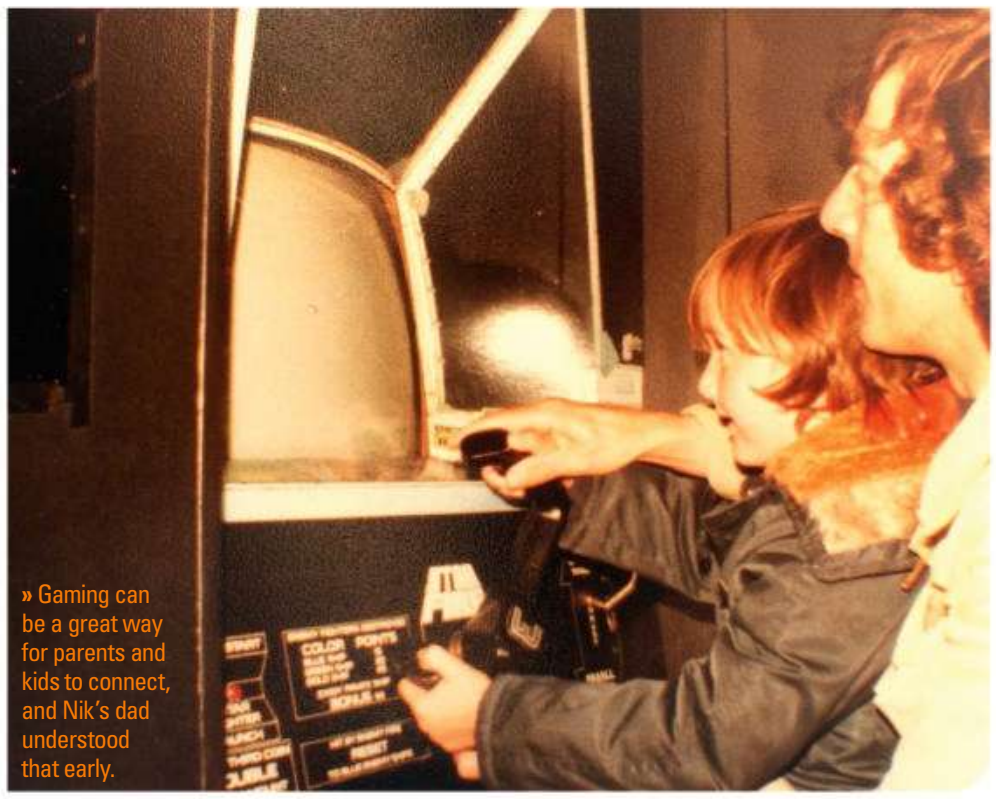
Having just gone through some old photos, I found one from 1978 – a pic of my dad introducing me to the joy of the arcade, by sitting me at the controls of *Star Fire*.

Jump forward 44 years and I'm still gaming (*Vampire Survivors* has taken over my life), as is my dad – he's obsessed with *Star Wars: Galaxy Of Heroes* on his iPad.

Anyway, love the mag – the old stuff makes me feel warm and fuzzy.

Nik, Canada

That's an excellent old photo Nik, and it's lovely to hear that both you and your dad are still very passionate about the hobby. Thank you so much for your very kind words about the magazine. It means a lot.



» Gaming can be a great way for parents and kids to connect, and Nik's dad understood that early.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Televisual treats

Though the fallout from the Netflix series *Harry & Meghan* has been seemingly inescapable, that hasn't been the show that we've latched on to. Darran has been watching the Disney+ series *9-1-1*, an emergency services procedural in which people frequently manage to survive injuries that you'd instantly assume to be fatal. Meanwhile, Nick has been watching the BBC's reality game show *The Traitors*, an *Among Us*-style affair in which the contestants are proving surprisingly adept at outsmarting themselves.

Your say

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

Which games defined the Amiga for you?

» [Amiga] *Superfrog* was a popular Amiga game from Team17.

Sinfour
Shadow of The Beast. The graphics, music and gameplay just blew me away. Quite a difficult game to play, but as a very young kid, I managed to finish the game without cheats. [Impressive - Ed]

SensibleSoccer.de
Sensible World Of Soccer! Because it not only defined the Amiga but is the most influential sports game of all time, recognised in the Game Canon (ten most important games of all time) by Stanford University.

Emily Jane Morgan
Amiga was my first gaming experience. When my brother allowed me within a few feet of his A500, apprehensive of my four-year-old self's clumsiness, I sat down next to him for an evening of *Superfrog*, *James Pond*, *Road Rash* and *Zool*. The times we didn't squabble were when the Amiga was on.

Neil McEwan
As an ST owner back in the day, and a life-long lover of the *Alien* movie, *Alien Breed* was the game that I desperately wanted to own.

Benn Banasik
Silkworm! From the sound that blasts as soon as you start, the smooth movement of the jeep and helicopter, and the cool graphics, all while playing along with a friend is fantastic!

Phil
The games sponsored by foodstuffs stick in the memory! Quavers *Pushover* came with my Amiga, 7Up *Cool Spot*, McDonald's *Mick And Mack*, *Zool* with the Chupa Chups and *James Pond: Robocod* with the Penguins.

John Ephraim
Playing Turrican 2 on a friend's Amiga with the fabulous graphics and sound, and the unique sounds of the disk drive... I had to get one for myself so I ordered the 500+ *Cartoon Classics* pack, then admitted this to my parents when the 'missed delivery' card came to our house.

Book 'em Danno
Shadow Of The Beast. The smooth parallax scrolling and animation. It was also on demo mode in every computer shop.

retro GAMER

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ENDGAME

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING DX

» After getting stranded on Koholint Island, Link embarks on a quest to awaken the mysterious Wind Fish that resides there. However, his journey reveals unsettling information which suggests that the island is nothing more than a dream and will disappear once the Wind Fish is awakened. What is poor Link to do?

01

» After defeating the dastardly Dethl, Link is greeted by the owl who has been giving him helpful advice throughout his quest. It turns out that the cheeky scamp was actually the Wind Fish's spirit all along.

02

» The Wind Fish finally awakens from its deep slumber, and tells Link that it is now time for them both to return to the real world. Link is sad and fearful of what will become of his friends such as Marin, the young girl he met.

03

» He's a brave chap though and dutifully plays The Ballad Of The Wind Fish again. True to the Wind Fish's word, Koholint begins to fade and Link is rudely ejected from the fabricated island. Poor Marin. What will become of her?

04

» Link awakens and finds himself clinging to driftwood, just like he was at the start of his adventure. He remembers Koholint, just like the Wind Fish says he would, but it doesn't ease his loss. He already misses his dear friend.

05

» But then, as the Wind Fish flies overhead, there's a flash of bright light and a happy Link sees Marin in the skies above. Soon after, a gull appears carrying the embodiment of Marin on the adventures she's always dreamed of having. Awww.

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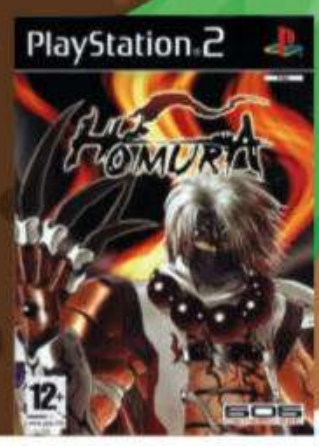

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